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**THUS RELIGION GROWS**

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THE STORY OF JUDAISM

MORRIS GOLDSTEIN

RABBI

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THUS RELIGION GROWS**

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**FIRST EDITION**

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*To*  
**ISRAEL**  
**BROTHER AND COLLEAGUE**

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How does religion come to be what it is?

Let us follow the story of one particular religion, Judaism, whose span of activity reaches from remote antiquity to the present day—and we shall see.

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## PREFACE

A PATTERN in gold is boldly woven into the history of the Jew. It gives quality and character to the record of the Jew; it is his distinctiveness, his glory, his *raison d'être*. This pattern in gold is the religion of the Jew.

Is it not amazing, then, to discover that there has not yet appeared in English a continuous account, in a single volume, of the growth of the Jewish religion from its very origin to the present day? There are, to be sure, histories of Jewish literature, of Jewish music, of Jewish philanthropy, of the Jewish people—and in all these histories religion necessarily occupies the most important position—but there is still lacking a history of the religion itself, of the process of religious growth, such as is reflected in the literature and demonstrated in the life of the people.

Perhaps the closest approach to this objective is to be found in George Foot Moore's "History of Religions," but there, unfortunately, the necessity of describing several religions confines the treatment of Judaism to but an outline. Abraham Geiger's scholarly "Judaism and Its History," written in 1864 (originally in German), is a series of individual lectures which conclude with the close of the Middle Ages. True, particular periods or phases of Judaism—the Religion of Ancient Israel, for example, or Hellenistic Judaism or Rabbinic Judaism or Reform Judaism—have been admirably dealt with in separate studies. The need is urgent, however, historically to survey the entire course of Judaism and thus to present a unified picture of the gradual unfolding and shaping of the Jewish religion.

It is unfair to judge Judaism by any one phase of its development. Religion is dynamic. It grows, along with man's growth. One historic religion differs from a second historic religion because of its different history, and although both

may seek similar values and both may arrive at similar truths yet each bears the stamp, the momentum and the inspiring appeal, of its own history, and the subtle shades of meaning resultant therefrom.

In "What We Jews Believe" (p. 32), Samuel S. Cohon has suggested an apt analogy. "Suppose we were asked to distinguish the Hudson from the Mississippi. Would it be enough to point to the water which both of them contain? Or would it suffice to subject a quantity of water from each river to a chemical analysis for the discovery of their constituent properties? The chemist would find hydrogen and oxygen in both, and he would probably find some other elements besides. The water of one river may appear muddier than the water of another river, and consequently less pleasant to taste. Whatever the results of the test this procedure will hardly convey to us any idea whatsoever of either the Hudson or the Mississippi. To gain a proper picture of either river, we have to learn something about its sources, about the length, width, and depth of its current, about the countries which it traverses and about the various uses to which it is put."

It is the experience of several years' pioneer work in England—in organizing into a Jewish congregation many who, because they could find no adequate modern expression of their religion, had become estranged from their heritage, and many who challenged entirely the validity of religion—which has impressed me with the urgent need for a clear and uninvolved narration of how religion grows, of how the religion of the Jew has evolved. To unfold the story of Judaism, in the light of cause and effect, is a colossal venture. Yet, a start must be made, rather sooner than later. There is the consolation and there is the challenge of Rabbi Tarphon (Talmud: Abot 2:21): "It is not incumbent upon thee to finish the work; neither art thou free to desist from it."

Inasmuch as this story is written for the general reader, the pages have not been burdened with footnotes. The recognized authorities of the particular periods have been studied and wherever necessary the original sources have been con-



sulted. In the transliteration of Hebrew names and words (subject to much variation) the system of the Jewish Encyclopedia has been followed, with few deliberate exceptions.

The reader who desires greater detail of any one phase of Judaism will find a selected bibliography appended.

A special word of indebtedness must be expressed to President Julian Morgenstern for training in the method of Bible analysis, to Professor Jacob Mann for his important corrections of the prejudices and errors in Graetz's basic History of the Jews and to Professor Samuel S. Cohon for theological distinctions—in the studies at the Hebrew Union College ; to Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan for specific suggestions ; to Dr. Claude G. Montefiore for the values derived from personal contacts and conversations when this volume was first contemplated. Difficult to express is the extent of my appreciation to Adeline, my wife, for her untiring assistance, sound advice and steady encouragement.

The dominant desire throughout is to be as objective and non-partisan as is humanly possible in a book on religion, to be neither polemical nor apologetic. To adhere to the original aim of continuity and clarity, any digression into the battles of scholars over points of dispute is purposely avoided. The concern above all is to trace the main pattern of Judaism.

MORRIS GOLDSTEIN

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# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOW A RELIGION IS BORN — BIBLICAL JUDAISM .	1
1. Man's Ascent to God . . . . .	1
2. Pre-Israelite Background . . . . .	5
3. The Bible Begins to Speak, but its Story is Challenged . . . . .	8
4. The Desert Debut . . . . .	12
5. The Exodus Really a Genesis . . . . .	13
6. Moses, Miracles, Yahweh . . . . .	15
7. Israel Covenanted to Yahweh . . . . .	16
8. New Foundations for the Religion of Israel	19
9. Joshua Confirms Yahweh's Power . . . . .	22
10. Israel's Religion Turns Agricultural . . . . .	24
11. Yahwism versus Baalism, and their Proph- etic Contestants . . . . .	27
12. Giants of the Soul . . . . .	33
13. History, the Laboratory of Religion . . . . .	40
14. A Second Exodus and Again a Genesis . . . . .	46
15. The Persian Influence Permeates . . . . .	53
16. On Intermarriage . . . . .	57
17. The Writing of the Torah . . . . .	59
18. Putting a Moral into History . . . . .	64
19. Each Poem a Prayer . . . . .	67
20. Wisdom Literature, and Religion's Deepest Problem . . . . .	71
21. Judaism versus Hellenism . . . . .	75
22. The Scribes Champion Judaism . . . . .	81
23. The Issue Drawn: Hasidim and Maccabees Battle Hellenism . . . . .	84
24. Judaism Emerges Purged . . . . .	90
25. The Bible Completed . . . . .	92

26. Religion of the Bible . . . . .	95
II. HOW A RELIGION LIVES ON — RABBINIC JUDAISM . . . . .	102
1. The Oral Chain of Tradition . . . . .	102
2. When Religion Stops Growing . . . . .	105
3. Who Were the Pharisees? How Did They Keep the Religion Democratic? . . . . .	107
4. Hillel and Shammai . . . . .	115
5. The Messiah, the Saviour! . . . . .	118
6. Did He Come? . . . . .	122
7. Christianity Came . . . . .	126
8. Judaism Clothed in Alexandrian Philosophy . . . . .	128
9. Judaism Survives the Final Destruction of Temple and Nation . . . . .	132
10. Rabbi Akiba and the Tragic Bar Kokeba Revolt . . . . .	139
11. Proselytes and Converts . . . . .	142
12. After Defeat, Consolidation . . . . .	146
13. The Result: the Mishnah and the Midrash . . . . .	150
14. Jews Everywhere Adhere to the Norm . . . . .	154
15. Crisis Again Crystallizes Judaism . . . . .	159
16. The Babylonian Talmud . . . . .	164
17. How Judaism Helped Mohammed Formu- late his Religion . . . . .	170
18. Through Questions and Answers Judaism Flourishes . . . . .	175
19. Payyetic Poetry . . . . .	177
20. The First Threat to Rabbinic Judaism: Rise of Karaism . . . . .	180
21. Rationalism Defeats Karaism and Enters Judaism . . . . .	187
22. Decline in Babylonia and Revival in Spain . . . . .	193
23. When Grammar Decided Religious Issues . . . . .	196
24. The Broadening of Religious Scholarship . . . . .	202
25. The Greatest Jewish Teacher of the Middle Ages . . . . .	210
26. Protest Against Rationalism in Religion: Legalism . . . . .	216

# CONTENTS

xiii

## CHAPTER

## PAGE

27. Protest Against Rationalism in Religion: Mysticism . . . . .	220
28. The Talmud a Refuge in Time of Trouble . . . . .	225
29. Renaissance Critics of Official Judaism . . . . .	230
30. The Accepted Code of Orthodoxy . . . . .	237
31. Messianic Mirage in a Stagnant Ghetto . . . . .	239
32. Rabbinic Judaism Endures . . . . .	247
33. Its Strength . . . . .	249

## III. HOW A RELIGION FACES THE FUTURE — CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM . . . . .

1. The Hedge and the Gate . . . . .	262
2. Within the Hedge: Hasidim and Mitnag- gedim . . . . .	263
3. An Attack Upon the Gates . . . . .	269
4. Vaulting over the Gates . . . . .	274
5. Opening of the Ghetto Gates . . . . .	281
6. Adapting Judaism to the Modern World . . . . .	292
7. Scene of Action Shifts to America . . . . .	300
8. Reform Judaism . . . . .	306
9. Spiritual Rebirth in Zionism . . . . .	310
10. Judaism Reconstructed as a Civilization . . . . .	319
11. Challenge of the Present . . . . .	320
12. Programs for the Religion of the Jew . . . . .	324
13. What of the Future? . . . . .	330

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	335
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INDEX . . . . .	343
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# CHAPTER I

## *HOW A RELIGION IS BORN*

### [ BIBLICAL JUDAISM ]

#### 1. MAN'S ASCENT TO GOD

How interesting it would be to discover what thoughts arose in the mind of man when he first emerged into life as a human being! Into a world of confusion was he placed, a world of contradictions, a world of good and bad, a world of beauty and ugliness, a topsy-turvy world, a world which whirled. How did waking man begin to make sense of the gigantic puzzle which surrounded him? Eager though we are to know, it is unlikely that we shall ever learn the inner struggles and complexities which accompanied the dawn of his intelligence. Prehistoric man buried his weapons and tools, which we may unearth and study. But he could not deposit his thoughts for the benefit of succeeding generations. These we must imagine and reconstruct along the lines indicated by the earliest records we possess and by the life of primitive communities still extant.

At first, man's mind was probably a confusion of unanalyzed sensations. He could not understand the forces of nature. That he should understand them and convert them to his use, his very existence demanded. His desire to comprehend the world about him and to enter into a satisfactory relationship with it was the keenest desire he felt—as keen as the desire to keep alive. This desire was his religion.

Religion, primarily, is the heroic and frequently pathetic effort of man to adjust himself to the world. The desire for adjustment is prompted by an organic urge to survive, and religion, to this extent, is innate. Wherever there is religion there is the same aim, expressed in two ways. Ofttimes it

seeks to transform man to fit the world, as when religion teaches submission to and a merging with the forces of the universe. Ofttimes it seeks to transform the world to fit the requirements of man, as when religion teaches the power of man to create a new and better order. In these contrasting efforts, religion may succeed or it may fail, but the aim is the same — adjustment.

Which one of his many primitive experiences impressed early man most strongly, to give specific form to his religious response, cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. It may be that an overwhelming fear clutched at his heart, a fear that nature was conspiring to engulf him: such an impression would lead him to attribute to objects of nature a life similar to his own, with personal motives for acting as they did; if he stubbed his toe against a rock, for example, the cause of his pain was not his own clumsiness but rather the mischief of the rock, the caprice or the grudge of the rock. It may be also that dreams in which the dead lived again and in which ordinary persons or objects displayed extraordinary powers — it may be that such dreams impressed him with the presence of a world of persons and powers beyond that which is visible, but which directly affects the visible realm. Most likely, both of these, the world of mystifying dreams and the world of harsh nature — together with other influences too — combined to create the earliest ideas of gods or spiritual powers. This we do know for a certainty: in his struggle to adjust himself to his environment that he might continue to exist, primitive man, from the very beginning, realized that he must cope with the supernatural as well as the natural.

To us, who live thousands of years later, his understanding of the supernatural seems crude, extremely crude. And the means which early man employed to convert the spiritual powers to his benefit seem equally crude. He thought that by clever devices he could force the powers to do what he wanted, or that he could bribe or cajole or persuade or flatter them. This was not the only expression of the primitive man's religion. His religion, let us remember, was his desire for adjustment to the world. This religion, this desire,

found a partial expression in the simple tools and implements of stone which necessity taught him to construct for the conquest of nature even as the same necessity taught him to construct a ritual wherewith to win the help of spirits and gods. Both were requisite. Both were devices to meet the demands of the environment. One supplemented the other. Without the aid of the gods, the tools would fail ; without the tools, the gods could not aid. The desire for an improved adjustment — the religion — required both.

The stone tools and implements of primitive man have traveled a tremendous distance by the time we reach the twentieth century of modern life. They have undergone a huge transformation. They have grown into whirring wheels of endless factories and these factories now create a world more fantastic than that of which early man dreamed. The other expression of primitive man's religion — his thought of spiritual powers and their use — has also moved forward. It too has undergone a huge transformation. It is no longer instructed by fear or dreams (no longer, that is, among those who live in the twentieth century in spiritual thought as well as in physical activity) ; it no longer seeks to cajole or bribe the gods. The religion of today has the potency to create a world of beauty and goodness and grandeur which would exceed the highest hope of primitive man.

But it was only slowly, haltingly, that man came to know more accurately and less crudely the meaning of God and religion. It could not be otherwise. Man was a new-comer. Who was there to teach him? Only the pressure of his environment and the genius of his being. Experience. Trial and error. And failure more frequently than success.

The limit of his capacity to advance and to understand set a limit to man's comprehension of the nature of God and the nature of worship. Then, when the utmost limit seemed to have been reached, the pressure of circumstance brought to the genius of his being a new awakening and a new grasp of meaning. The impossible, necessity made possible. This has happened time and time again. That new grasp of meaning we are accustomed to call inspiration ; or when viewed

as arising from influences greater than man we have learned to call it revelation; both are the same, the difference being in the point of view.

So, through the ages, man's understanding of religion has become clearer and truer. Even as with greater knowledge man was transforming the pseudo-science of alchemy into the true science of chemistry, the pseudo-science of magic-healing into the true science of medicine, and the pseudo-science of astrology into the true science of astronomy, so with greater knowledge and experience man has transformed the pseudo-religion of fear into the true religion of the One God.

To be sure, God, as He really is, has not changed at all. It is just that the ideas about God have changed and that His real nature has been more accurately discovered, with man's own increasing maturity. And who knows how much more we are still to mature, even now, before we gain a complete comprehension of the real God?

Seeing what tremendous strides man has taken in his unwearying ascent to God, seeing how radically religion has departed from its earliest origins, it becomes immediately evident that to attempt to gain a fair estimate of any historic religion without some knowledge of its unfolding, its evolution and its historic growth, would be altogether inadequate. It might result in a distorted impression wherein the crudities of one age would mingle in jumbled equality with the refinements of a subsequent and superior age. The valuable knowledge in the scope of spiritual experience is the knowledge of the causative factors, molding and changing, selecting and improving, those beliefs and convictions which are so vital to mankind. Once it was discovered that two plus two equal four, that was the end of it. But the discovery of God never rested. Every possible angle, every possible amplification, every possible application, had to be explored.

Religions all seek to know God and man's relation to God. More than one group, for example, teaches the unity of God. But what gives to each faith its distinctiveness, its unique appeal, and its reason for individual survival, is the historic

background which leaves a residue of its own subtle distinctions and its own persuasive powers. Historic religions, while agreeing in purpose, yet differ because of their respective histories. In the very fibre and texture of the Jew—whose religion we are to investigate—is the consciousness of a historic continuity, that he belongs to the most recent episode in a romantic story.

## 2. PRE-ISRAELITE BACKGROUND

IN remote antiquity, the ancestors of ancient Israel were an indistinguishable part of a larger group whom we have learned to call Semites. We call them Semites because the closely related languages these people spoke are known as Semitic languages; therefore it is thought, though it cannot be proven, that all these people belong to a Semitic stock.

The original home of the Semitic-speaking group is a matter of conjecture. They may have come from Central Asia, at various periods migrating into the heart of Arabia. That precedes the dawn of history; hence we cannot be certain of our theories. We do know that for a long time after the dawn of history these Semites wandered about in the wastelands of the Arabian peninsula and that subsequently they edged up into the less arid lands of northern Arabia.

The religion of these Semites was as elementary as that which we trace in most primitive groups. We call it Animism—or Animatism, in the crudest stage. Anything, even a stone, which could affect their lives in any way was thought to be animated by a life and will—a spirit—similar to their own. These spirits could harm or they could help. Therefore they were worshipped, that they should help, and not harm. To us, all this may seem childish. But we must remember that the age of which we speak was the childhood of mankind.

There is no conclusive proof to link the ancestors of the ancient Israelites to Animism, excepting this, that inasmuch as they were a part of the Semites it must be assumed that their religion was that of the Semites. Scholars who have gone

into this matter claim that they can find in the Bible echoes or remnants of the earlier animistic beliefs. Let us examine a few instances.

To a people living about the desert, water — especially running water — is of great importance for the sustenance of life. Hence, with regard to the Semites, a reliable investigator (W. Robertson Smith, in "Religion of the Semites," p. 173)\* writes: "The one general principle which runs through all the varieties of the legends, and which also lies at the basis of the ritual, is that the sacred waters are instinct with divine life and energy." The same writer mentions that in Palestine, to this day, all springs are viewed as the abodes of spirits, and the peasant women ask their permission before drawing water. As an echo in the Bible of this form of Animism, attention is called to the names in Genesis 14: 7. Here the place Kadesh (which means "sanctuary") is also called En-Mishpat (which means "the fount of decision"); hence the theory that the fount may have been a sanctuary at one time. And from the fact that Beer-Sheba, "the Well of Seven" (or "the Seven Wells"), became a sanctuary for the Israelites some seek to deduce that it was held sacred in the first instance through the animistic belief in sacred waters.

Trees, too, were thought to have spirits capable of producing life and energy. Especially evergreen trees: they seemed never to die. In the manner of worship, pledged gifts were hung on these trees, with accompanying prayers. Some students think the sentence in Genesis (21: 33), "And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-Sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God," is a reminiscence of the earlier worship of trees. The reference to the burning bush (Dt. 33: 16), "Him that dwelt in the bush," is likewise quoted in this connection. According to the animistic belief, the rustling of the leaves revealed the presence of the spirit in the tree. The manner of the rustle was carefully studied and interpreted as an oracular decision. Of this, too, scholars find a remnant in the Bible (in II Samuel 5: 23, 24). David inquires of the Lord whether he should go to

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battle the Philistines; he is answered, "And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines."

The Animism of the Semites involved also sacred stones and sacred rocks and sacred mountains. Eben-ezer is mentioned in the Bible several times: it means "a stone of help"—is there any particular significance in that? The fact that Jacob has a unique dream while sleeping on some stones at Bethel, and the fact that he erects one stone for a pillar and pours oil upon the top of it, has given rise to the theory that behind the incident described is a local tradition which held those stones sacred. Also, Gibeah is called the "hill of God"; presumably this is an echo of Animism. Again, why should Elijah carry out the great test between Yahweh and Baal on none other than Mount Carmel, if not because this mountain had already gained an earlier reputation for sanctity?

Are not these sufficient evidences to prove Israelitish Animism? . . . Perhaps. There is a likelihood of Animism in the religious ancestry of early Israel, although—to employ the non-committal verdict of the Scotch courts—the case is "not proven."

Another primary phase in the evolution of religion is known as Totemism. According to totemistic belief, those of a particular clan or tribe imagine that they are descended from some animal, or even a plant, which tie of kinship unites the members of the tribe. These animals therefore come to be venerated. By taboo they are declared sacred: one may not touch them, let alone eat them. Whether the ancestors of the Israelites went through the totemistic stage of religion is open to dispute. There are indications in the Bible of some relation between the names of animals and the names of tribes. In the Hebrew language, Simeon means a hyena; Deborah, a bee; Rachel, a ewe; Caleb, a dog; and so on. Moreover, is the prohibition with regard to using for food the meat of specified animals—much of which, in fact, one would ordinarily never think of eating—traceable to a totemistic taboo? Is the Second Commandment, the command not to worship

anything or to make a likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth, is this a protest against an earlier Totemism? . . . Possibly.

Hero-Ancestor-worship is the stage above Totemism in the evolution of religions. Remote departed heroes grow in importance until they become objects of worship. Of Ancestor-worship there are precious few traces among these Semites. One possible clue is in the use of the word Gad as a divine name (Isaiah 65 : 11); elsewhere, Gad is the name of one of Jacob's sons and of one of the tribes of Israel—and by this slender thread hangs the theory that the ancestor Gad has some relevant connection with the divinity Gad. In addition, it is observed that the grave of Sarah is held sacred, and when a grave becomes a sanctuary there is presumably reason to suspect Ancestor-worship. Finally, some of the mourning customs unearthed by archæologists might be interpreted as pointing in the same direction. Add together all the evidence and even then it is too scanty to build up as much as an argument.

A further stage in the development of religion we call Polytheism. There are still many gods, gods whose worship and actions have no essential connection with morality, but in Polytheism the gods and goddesses possess distinct names and separate individualities and special faculties and they frequently assume exaggerated human and animal forms. This is the sort of religion which immediately preceded, and accompanied, the historic appearance of the Israelites. This is the sort of religion the Israelites fought against and ultimately lifted to a loftier level. We shall have many encounters with Polytheism as we continue the tale of Israel's phenomenal discovery of new, and ever newer, meanings in the religious experience.

### 3. THE BIBLE BEGINS TO SPEAK, BUT ITS STORY IS CHALLENGED

At what point, then, do the Israelites first appear in history? According to the Bible tradition, Abraham is the father



of the Israelites. To Abraham is revealed the folly of worshipping crude gods and idols. He is "called" to the worship of Yahweh. At the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), Abraham feels impelled by a divine voice to take his immediate family and household, to migrate from Ur, which is in Southern Mesopotamia, to the Promised Land of Canaan. Here in Canaan, Abraham and his family are known as Hebrews, descendants of Eber. They are as strangers in the land. Particularly repelled are they by the degenerate Polytheism of Canaan and its abominable forms of worship. Throughout, they remain loyal to Yahweh, their God, and guide. They wander about with their flocks and herds. In times of famine they come to Egypt for food. Upon Abraham's death, his son Isaac leads the Hebrews in their continued allegiance to Yahweh. Isaac's son Jacob, who is later called Israel, becomes the third Patriarch of the Hebrews. His progeny are the Children of Israel. Joseph, one of his twelve sons, is sold into Egypt, where he ultimately rises to prominence and during a severe famine brings his father and brothers and their families to Egypt, to settle in Goshen on the eastern delta. A period of oppression under the Pharaoh of Egypt ensues. And now Moses is born. In the wilderness, in the midst of a phenomenal demonstration—the bush which burns but is not consumed—Yahweh reveals Himself as the Saviour of the Israelites. Thus inspired, Moses miraculously leads the Children of Israel out of Egypt, to the Mountain of God. Here Yahweh again reveals Himself; here Israel is elected a holy nation; here Moses establishes the religion of Israel.

This Bible tradition of the beginnings of Israel and of the religion of Israel has been the accepted and virtually unanimous belief of Jewry until recent times. It has served as authority, inspiration and stimulus for the religious life of the Jew. And in our day many Jews still accept this tradition in good faith.

Since the eighteenth century, however, scholars—both Jewish and non-Jewish—have been led to analyze the Bible along the lines of historical criticism. Through careful study, they

have discovered numerous discrepancies in thought and chronology and style; they have detected overlappings and contradictions of recorded facts; they have become aware of literary and textual difficulties; in the style of the Hebrew of one section of the Bible when compared with another not many lines removed they have discerned differences as great as the differences between the English of Chaucer and that of George Bernard Shaw—and equally great differences in thought and outlook too. Bible scholars have therefore concluded that the Bible is a composite production representing the growth of centuries and the contributions of countless authors, comprising a combination of myth, legend, oral tradition, prophecy, poetry, song, philosophy, law, drama and historic fact.

The earliest traditions of Israel are found in the first six Books of the Bible—the Five Books of Moses and the Book of Joshua—which together are called the Hexateuch. In analyzing the Hexateuch, Bible critics first single out a few isolated fragments of poetry which they date as far back as the early part of the twelfth century B.C.E.; that takes us back to more than thirty-one hundred years ago. Of the remaining bulk of the Hexateuch, the original nucleus, they say, follows two independent strains of tradition which were set down in writing during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E., and welded together, to some extent, during the seventh century B.C.E. One of these strains of tradition, which scholars designate by the symbol E (because God is usually called Elohim), is that of the northern tribes of Israel: even here a still earlier nucleus can be traced (and symbolized as C). The other strain of tradition, which scholars designate by the symbol J (because God is usually called Yahweh, or as we might spell it, Jehovah), is that of the southern tribes of Judah: this is the predominating tradition and this too contains an earlier nucleus (symbolized as K). E and J having been welded together during the seventh century B.C.E. become JE. Accordingly, one comes to speak familiarly of the J Code or the E Code or the JE Code. The habit of designating Codes with letters thus seems to have gained vogue among

Bible scholars before it suggested itself to contemporary governmental heads. The results are apt to be equally confusing, as we shall see.

A book unearthed in 621 B.C.E., called Deuteronomy (symbolized as D), led to a revision and amplification of all the earlier material in the combined document JE, in accordance with the religious tone of Deuteronomy, and then this three-fold combination (including the Book of Deuteronomy) was completed during the sixth century B.C.E.—and is designated JED. Later revisions and additions of a priestly character (hence, the symbol P) were made during the fifth century. P added to JED equals JEDP, and JEDP stands for the entire product as now combined and fused. Thus the process of additions and revisions continued, and was not completed until about 200 B.C.E. So say the Bible critics.

This vivisection of the Bible has exposed to public gaze its historic unreliability. How can the account of the Patriarchs be accurate if the events were not set down in writing until nearly a thousand years after they took place? Especially severe were the first doctors of analysis. Equipped with a knowledge of the weaknesses of other primitive religions, they forthwith consigned to the realm of myth and legend nearly all of the early Bible narrative. Of late, however, a more conservative tone has entered Bible criticism. Archæological findings have established the probabilities of at least the outline of the Bible tradition. Archæology has dug up, out of the past, names equivalent to Abraham, Joseph, Moses: whether the reference is to these specific people of the Bible it is still impossible to say. Moreover, an Egyptian stele of the thirteenth century B.C.E. contains reference to the people of Israel, residents in Palestine. The dismembered Bible is performing a miracle as impressive as any recorded within its pages. It is reviving. Knit together, it is still the best source of our information. Even allowing for legendary accumulation, unless evidence to the contrary is introduced and proven, it behooves us to accept in good faith the basic theme — if not the personal details — of the Bible drama of Hebraic life under the Patriarchs.

## 4. THE DESERT DEBUT

WHEN the Israelites first step into history we find them nomads in the desert. They comb the desert, seeking pasture-lands. The heat of the day scorches and the cold of the night chills. When the flocks have nibbled away the meagre grass of the oasis, these nomads move on with their flocks, during the night, by the clear light of the desert moon. For nomads the moon is more than a moon. It is a blessing. It is divine. Its new birth each month is hailed with joy and celebrated as a festival. That the Hebrew lunar calendar and new-moon observances thus found their origin is not unlikely. Possibly the Sabbath, coming at each quarter of the moon month, originated similarly.

The Passover Festival (Pesah) is traced to this same period of Israel's history. It may well have originated as a sacrificial offering of the firstlings of the flocks and herds to the deity who brought the flocks and herds into existence. This procedure would follow from the principle of taboo. If the animals were brought into life by the deity, then he has a primary right to possess them — this is the logic of taboo. If that right is violated, the deity as original owner will enforce his right. Human beings, however, need these animals for food. That creates the problem. How circumvent the proprietary rights of the deity? By substituting rites for rights! By sacrificing the firstlings, and keeping the other offspring. Hence, the Passover Festival on the night of the equinoctial full moon of spring, in which the blood of the sacrifice seems to have been smeared on a sacred stone or (at a later stage) on the exterior of the abodes, and the meal eaten in its entirety before morning.

Later in the year, when shearing-time came, it was realized that the wool of the sheep and the goats was yet another gift of the gods. Some of the unearned increment had to be returned. Again a joyful occasion for festive thank-offerings, and again the theory as well as the practice of religion were adjusted to meet life's practical requirements.

Some of the other customs of nomadic peoples, customs

such as circumcision, refraining from food before a battle, the Lex Talionis (the "eye for an eye" law), blood revenge, the devoting of spoils of war wholly to the deity (Herem), appear to have their origin in this desert period. In general, those customs which show the environmental effect of the desert are assigned to this preliminary period in the evolution of Judaism.

#### 5. THE EXODUS REALLY A GENESIS

THAT from the desert the Israelites came to sojourn in Egypt, and that they were here enslaved, is not seriously doubted. Subjection to slavery is nothing to boast of; this tradition would hardly be created in any process of legendary glorification. The very mention of the degraded state of slavery is in itself proof of its reality. Moreover, the extent to which the Exodus from Egypt became ingrained in the consciousness of the Jew removes grounds for doubt. So profound was its influence upon the whole subsequent development of the religion of Israel that even if the Exodus did not take place as is recorded then we must assume that something of a very similar nature did occur.

Real doubts have been raised as to how many of the Israelite tribes were involved in the Exodus. Some say: only the tribes of Joseph, Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, which are grouped together as the Rachel tribes; that the others, the Leah tribes, had already made their way independently to Canaan at various times and through various routes. Others say: Judah, Simeon and Levi; others, that only the tribe of Levi ever dwelt in Goshen. However, there is some support for the main tradition of the Bible, namely, that all the twelve tribes were in Egypt and that four hundred and eighty years before Solomon built the Temple—that is, about 1447 B.C.E.—Yahweh inspired Moses to take advantage of unusual troubles which plagued Egypt and thus to lead the twelve tribes of Israel into the adventure of the Wilderness.

So heroic was this achievement of Moses in the matter of the Exodus, it was inevitable that heroics would in time be wreathed about his life. The halo of legend which has

come to encircle Moses is a tribute of the Jew's love for him.

Many words have been written and spoken in an endeavor to explain the "miracles" which Moses performed. Some of the explanations are no less miraculous than the miracles themselves. With regard to the crossing of the Red Sea, for instance, one theory holds that the Hebrews crossed not the Red Sea but a Sea of Weeds, that when the Hebrews, pursued by the Egyptians, reached this point, a sudden volcanic eruption combined with an earthquake to produce the appearance of land on which the Israelites crossed to safety; but that when the Egyptians arrived on this same strip of land the underlying vaporous gases, which had caused it to appear, suddenly dispersed, and the Egyptians sank with the land. Another theory tells of a very high wind combining with a very low tide to lay bare a stretch of land, normally covered by water, on which the Israelites were able to cross, but on which the Egyptians were trapped by the quicksands and the returning tide.

Whatever the explanation, something unusual did happen and it had a revolutionary effect upon the religion of Israel. No record of this event has as yet been found in Egypt—it may have been a matter of small concern to the Egyptians—but it was of utmost importance to Israel. The Hebrews looked upon the deliverance as providential, the work of Yahweh.

Regardless of the scientific evidence that may be adduced to prove the "naturalness" of the "miracles," the fact remains that the hindering annoyances visited upon the Egyptians, whatever they were, did come at a time when the Israelites desperately needed the aid of nature and it was this remarkable coincidence which enabled them to escape their crushing bondage and to enter upon a new career of freedom.

Unexpected acts of nature—plagues, storms, earthquakes—have frequently helped to shape the destiny of people and nations: the British victory over the Spanish Armada, in which freaks of weather were contributing factors, and the consequent supremacy of the British Navy, is a striking illustration in modern history. No one will deny that the Black Plague left an indelible impress on the history of Europe. It is

necessary, then, to recognize that powers other than those of man — the powers of nature, which we may properly call superhuman — deeply affect the welfare and happiness of man in history. When the forces of nature express themselves at a time of crisis, to constitute a turning point in history, then that coincidence looms up as more than a coincidence: it reveals itself as an act of providence. Therefore, to look upon the “miracles” as merely accidental happenings is insufficient. For Israel in Egypt they were direct acts of God.

Inasmuch as the religion of Israel grew in response to the group experience of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, and the circumstances surrounding it, became for the people of Israel the revelation of new truths in the realm of the spirit. The Exodus meant the lifting of the Hebrew religion to a higher plane, never before attained. The Exodus was in a profound sense the Genesis of Judaism.

#### 6. MOSES, MIRACLES, YAHWEH

To have snatched the Israelites out of their bondage was not enough. The people needed assurance that they would not be stranded in the Wilderness, that the deity who saved them would see them through, would be with them, would guide them, would help them. On, then, to the Mountain of Yahweh! This became the first objective for Moses and his straggling band.

The Mountain of Yahweh is sometimes called Horeb and sometimes Sinai. We have no sure knowledge of the precise location of this mountain. It is probably in the territory of the Midianites, where the Kenite tribe dwelt, for it is here that Moses had received the burning behest of Yahweh to free the Israelites.

Atop this sacred mountain, Moses entered into a Covenant with Yahweh. The Children of Israel proclaimed Yahweh their One God. Yahweh elected the Children of Israel His chosen people.

The nature of Yahweh prior to this time is open to much research. According to the one tradition of the Bible (J),

Yahweh was the God of Israel even during the life of the Patriarchs and He was fully known to them. According to the other tradition (E), Yahweh became the God of Israel only at this time of Moses. If the latter tradition is the true one, how did Moses learn of Yahweh? There are several theories. It is probable that Yahweh was the deity of the Kenites, a deity that brings into existence the fundamental needs of existence (Yahweh being the Hiphil of the verb "Hayyah," "to be"). He is described also as a deity that manifests itself in volcanic eruptions, and a god of war "whose arrows will go forth as the lightning" (Zech. 9: 14). It may be that Yahweh's reputed success in warfare attracted Moses during that period in his life when he was forced to flee from Egypt and find refuge with the Kenites. He contemplated: perhaps Yahweh can deliver the Israelites from their oppression. He sought to learn more and more about Yahweh from his father-in-law, Jethro, a priest among the Kenites.

With his message of hope Moses hastened to his people. They trusted Moses—not at once, but eventually. They believed in Yahweh. They believed He would save them. Save them He did, in a manner that was miraculous or—well—hardly less than miraculous. Yahweh's power was put to the test (the Hebrew word "nes" means both "miracle" and "test") and Yahweh demonstrated the might of His power. And now, because of the wonders of nature that He had wrought for the redemption, Israel felt obligated to the deity, bound by specific commands which Moses would make known to them.

#### 7. ISRAEL COVENANTED TO YAHWEH

At the Mountain of Yahweh, to which Moses had led the emancipated devotees of Yahweh, a holy enthusiasm possessed the people. Exultantly Israel entered a Covenant with Yahweh. The divine name—and the knowledge of the name meant for them knowledge of the very essence of the divine—was here revealed. The code of laws, expressing the fundamentals of the religion, was here given out. So inspiring was the moment that the very earth seemed to



tremble; the mountain flashed fire and fumed with smoke; the people trembled. In their ears thundered the ten great Commands, for them not only to hear but to obey. The ten Commands were engraved in the hearts of those Israelites and for the benefit of future generations they were likewise engraved on two tablets of stone! But, strange to relate, the impression on the hearts of the Israelites outlasted that on the stone. The stone in time was lost and now it is difficult to say which were the original Commands.

Because of their simplicity and nomadic nature, it is thought in some quarters that the Commands which are found in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Book of Exodus (verses 14-28) are the original ones:

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. The feast of Passover thou shalt keep.
4. The firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; all the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem.
5. None shall appear before Me empty.
6. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh thou shalt rest.
7. Thou shalt observe the feast of ingathering.
8. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread, neither shall the sacrifice of the Passover remain until the morning.
9. The firstlings of thy flocks thou shalt bring unto Yahweh, thy God.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

There are not really sufficient reasons, however, to disbelieve that the ten Commands which the Bible itself connects with this stirring episode of Israel's history are the truly original ones. These we read in the twentieth chapter of Exodus (verses 2-17). In their earliest and unappended form they probably read as follows:

1. I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

The remaining part of the Covenant with Yahweh supplemented the original ten Commands. Known as Torah—"instruction"—they became the living tradition of Israel. As a living tradition, the Torah was continually added to and improved, or reinterpreted, in the light of the continued growth and experience of the people. There was something valuable in this: the Torah would not be prone to stagnate. The continuance of a fluctuating oral tradition later became a distinguishing feature of Judaism and perhaps one of its finest aspects.

Mention should be made of the orthodox belief among Jews that to Moses was revealed the Torah, that is, the Pentateuch—known as the Written Law—as well as its traditional interpretation—known as the Oral Law. Still, the entire revelation was entrusted only to Moses, whilst for the entire people of Israel the full implications of the Torah could come only through slow and gradual enlightenment. For the people, through study and experience would they fathom the deeper meanings.

The ritual involved in the early worship of Yahweh was probably simple and in keeping with the nomadic life of the tribes. The Ark served as the symbol of Yahweh, for it contained the sacred stones on which, it is assumed, were inscribed the divine Commands. In a tent called the Tabernacle was the Ark domiciled; it was here that the will of the deity could be consulted. Those specially qualified to interpret the will of Yahweh, as well as to care for the Ark in its journeying through the Wilderness, were formed into a priesthood. And tradition relates that Moses, the very first to hold this office, assigned the priesthood to Aaron and his descendants of the tribe of Levi.

From the Mountain of God, Moses led the Israelites on toward the Promised Land. The difficulties encountered in the wanderings through the Wilderness would have proven too severe for a leader other than Moses. For Moses was not only gifted with great executive and administrative skill but he was possessed with a spiritual ideal so powerful as to cope even with the scarcity of food and water. An unsuccessful attempt to enter Canaan from the south prolonged the hardships of the Wilderness. It now became necessary to follow a more circuitous route, to try to enter Canaan from the east as soon as a favorable occasion presented itself. Step by step, the Israelites reached the River Jordan, the very border of the Promised Land.

But by this time, after the years of wandering and waiting, Moses had reached the limit of his allotted years. His very last thought was for his people. With a reiteration and revision of his teachings, and a final exhortation for allegiance to Yahweh, Moses departed from the land of the living. But his spirit remained with his people. For them, "there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses."

#### 8. NEW FOUNDATIONS FOR THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

It is true that in certain regards the religious outlook of the Israelites at this stage was naïve. Their thought of Yahweh as a war god, a god concerned with sacrificial ritual, a god who paid special attentions to his own people, did not differentiate him in any important degree from the gods of other peoples. At the same time, in this foundation of the Israelite religion there were certain other elements which immediately singled it out and placed it on a level higher than that of the neighboring religions.

Much of the credit must go to the genius of Moses. The impress of his personality in the religion of Yahweh is clear. A rare creation of nature, Moses saw farther into the reality of God than any human being who preceded him ever had. Why one man should be born with the gift of sensitive insight so far in advance of his entire generation we do not know.

As in the discovery of scientific truth so in the discovery of spiritual truth, fortuitous circumstance yields its aid. But there is more than that. The human soul must be receptive. Moses was sensitive enough to grasp the new meanings.

Let us summarize those findings which at this stage distinguish the religion of Israel from that of the contemporary peoples.

First, impressed by the turn of events in Israel's providential march to freedom and overpowered by a sense of Yahweh's majesty, Moses beheld in the phenomena of nature the purposeful working of God's power: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, working wonders?" (Exod. 15: 11). Moses sensed the truth that God discloses His reality and purpose in the destiny of peoples.

A second noteworthy feature in Israel's early religion is the absence of any female deity in association with Yahweh. The sex element is eliminated from the worship of Yahweh. A contributing factor toward this healthy theology may have been the severe life of the desert which allows no play for extravagant vices. To one who knows little of the history of world religions this achievement of Israel may seem commendable but hardly startling. And yet its importance cannot be overstated. It is the first step toward the incorporeality of God and the morality of religion. While other religions of that day, and many after that day, could not escape the tendency to represent the deity in terms of the human family, Israel did escape it, and, more than that, did exclude the corruptive influences which generally accompanied such representation.

In the third place, if we accept the ten Commands of Exodus, Chapter Twenty, to be the ones given out by Moses, we have here — at this early date, thirty-three centuries ago — the first direct connection between deity and morality, the emphasis that God is worshipped not only with ritual, but also — and what we consider more important — with righteous conduct: to honor parents, not to kill nor steal nor covet nor

commit adultery nor bear false witness. To the eternal glory of Judaism, Moses riveted religion to morality.

A fourth unique phase is the thought that Yahweh is a jealous God. Otherwise it would have been easy for Israel to revert to Polytheism, by associating other gods with Yahweh. But a jealous god demands the undivided devotion of the worshipper. That tends to Monotheism.

A fifth distinctive element is the fact that whereas other peoples felt united to their gods by a natural tie—a bond of ancestry or kinship—Israel was joined to Yahweh by a special Covenant. In the case of other peoples, it was imperative for the god to care for his people; if he allowed them to disappear, the god would be left with no one to worship him; he would become a Jinn—a rather deserted deity with feeble authority. Contrariwise, Yahweh's existence and power were independent of Israel. Only according to a special Covenant did He become their God; if Israel broke the Covenant, He could forsake them. Yahweh was not inseparably tied to His people. This understanding of the connection would tend to make the Israelites all the more scrupulous in their conduct. If misfortune came to them it would not be so easy to blame the deity; they would have to look for the fault in themselves. The possibility of enlarging on this theme was seized upon by the prophets of a later day. Especially when they could point out that although the people of Israel may break their Covenant, the God of Israel does not!

Here we have a great advance in the religious history of Israel. A new peak is reached. A peak reached through the urge of a crisis! The necessity of escaping the intolerable bonds of slavery! In somewhat the same manner as a crisis in the economic life of a country forces new knowledge, a new realization, to appear from out of nowhere—necessity being ever the mother of invention—so a crisis in the soul experience of a people forces out a new knowledge, mainly a truer knowledge, of God, a knowledge which already exists in the nature of things and only waits to be discovered.

## 9. JOSHUA CONFIRMS YAHWEH'S POWER

JOSHUA now undertook the leadership of the tribes. It was his task to gain for them a foothold in Canaan. This he accomplished, fighting every inch of the way.

The Biblical narrative of Joshua's startling victories has in the past generation of scholars been subjected to deflation. It has been suggested that Joshua led only a fraction of the tribes, the others having arrived in two earlier and unrelated migrations into Canaan. A fresh light has now been shed on the dispute by the amazing discoveries in recent Palestine excavations. A leading archæologist, still engaged in unearthing the hidden ancient cities, now writes :

"Every identified site mentioned in the oldest sources (J, E and JE) of the Books of Joshua and Judges was revisited ; while three selected cities, Jericho, Ai and Hazor, were examined more thoroughly with the spade. The impression now became positive. No radical flaw was found at all in the topography and archæology of these documents. Moreover, a study of the subject-matter shows that these old portions of the Bible contain after all the core of the historical narrative, and are relatively free from discrepancies, giving a straightforward and fairly continuous account of the sequence of events . . . The results of piecing together the threads of evidence in this way will probably astonish many readers ; and it has convinced the writer, after years of study, that not only were these records in general founded upon fact, but they must have been derived from earlier writings, almost contemporary with the events described, so detailed and reliable is their information" (J. Garstang, "The Foundations of Bible History," pp. vii, viii).\*

According to this corroborated Bible tradition, Joshua's successful venture into Canaan was more than a military manœuvre. It was intimately bound up with the reputation of Yahweh. Yahweh had been able to effect the escape of the Israelites from Egypt ; He had been able to guide through the Wilderness ; would He now be able to help force an entrance into Canaan ? His powers were still to be tested.

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Divine aid was still imperative. Generations would be pressed to battle on, before the Promised Land could become a homeland, and in the prolonged grind nothing would so bolster the *esprit* as the awareness that the heavenly hosts are propitious. The Israelites, it seems, lacked no confidence. As they moved towards Jericho, the first point of attack, the tribes were full of expectation, waiting for something extraordinary to happen. . . . Something extraordinary did happen. The waters of the Jordan were cleft and the Children of Israel were enabled to cross over despite the high tide. (Landslides in 1267 and 1906 and an earthquake in 1927 accomplished this same marvel, this dividing of the waters of the Jordan.)

Now the air was tense with anticipation. Yahweh would again show the might of His arm! The elaborate Bible account of how the walls of Jericho fell may indeed be based on some unusual happening. It may be that an earthquake shook the walls to their foundations, for Jericho lies within a zone prone to earthquakes. An archæological examination of tell-tale remains of the walls reveals traces of their having fallen either because they were undermined or because of an earthquake shock. If because of an earthquake, then there is added significance to a verse of Deborah's Song, the most ancient passage of the Bible (Judges 5 : 4): "Lord, when Thou wentest forth out of Seir, when Thou marchedst out of the fields of Edom, the earth trembled." If because of an earthquake, then Yahweh, who is already associated with volcanic manifestations, would assuredly be given a full measure of credit for the victory. However the crumbling of the walls was effected, Yahweh it was who brought victory and to Yahweh therefore the entire city of Jericho was sacrificed. The religion "worked." By virtue of the continued success, Yahweh — in the minds of His worshippers — had confirmed His might as well as His concern for His covenanted people, Israel.

With Jericho as a base and Yahweh as an ally, Joshua succeeded with a few more conquests. Before long, however, the stone walls of the more strongly fortified cities put a halt

to his incursions. Joshua was thus forced to adopt a new policy, that of allotting the land amongst the separate tribes, for each tribe in its own way to take advantage of local conditions in its assigned territory and thus, as opportunities presented themselves, slowly and gradually to possess the land. In groups, the tribes moved off toward the wilder and already conquered areas of Canaan. One group of tribes settled in the south, with Hebron as the center; another, in the middle section, with Bethel as the center; and another group settled in the north. Enemy cities interdigitated the three groups. Fighting disunitedly, the tribes could gain but little headway. They therefore had to resort to a slow process of peaceful and imperceptible penetration.

Thus they mingled with their neighbors and thus they came in familiar contact with the religion of Canaan.

#### 10. ISRAEL'S RELIGION TURNS AGRICULTURAL

WHAT sort of religion did Israel find in Canaan?

In the unfertile south and southeast they found a type of religion not very different from that with which they were already acquainted; it was the religion of a pastoral people, semi-nomadic in character. The gods were called *Elim*. Etymologically, *El* means "might"; but their might notwithstanding, the *Elim* lingered only in the outskirts of Canaan.

The predominant religion of Canaan — as we would imagine, knowing how extensively the geographic and economic environments color a religion — conformed to the preponderant agricultural life of the inhabitants. What blessing would the tiller of the soil seek? An abundant harvest of corn and oil and wine, of course. Correspondingly, wild beasts, foreign enemies and disasters of nature would be the curses, by all means to be avoided. The deity to whom the plot of land belonged, he could bless or curse. *Baal* means "proprietor" and the Canaanite deity *Baal* did indeed own the land. Each *Baal* had his own area. Each area had its own *Baal*. But the functions and worship of all the *Baalim* (the plural form of the word *Baal*) were similar. It was each *Baal's* job to



make his domain of land fertile, in which task he was associated with a female deity, Baalath (Astarte) or Mother Earth. The offspring—in the form of the annual crops—constituted the third element in the primitive trinity.

To encourage the deities in the performance of their duties, the Canaanites naïvely worshipped Baal in a manner which we would frown upon as degraded and demoralizing. These simple people practiced as acts of worship those acts which human experience taught them were connected with fertility and productivity. The vicinity of green trees and the hilltops (Bamoth) were the locales of the cult: later features were the pole (Asherah), and the stone pillar (Mazebah), which may have symbolized the gateway of biological life; heaps of stones (Gilgalim) played some part in this early worship, also the household images (Teraphim); also the bull-heads and snake-heads which excavators are now finding in Palestine seem to have been used as symbols in the bizarre ritual.

The autumn reaping of the full harvest quite naturally prompted an expression of thanksgiving to Baal. That was the great feast of the year even as the harvest was for those farmers the most important event of the year—an event, quite literally, of life and death, for abundant crops meant prosperity whilst drought brought starvation. For the same reason a festival was celebrated also at the time the barley harvest began, in the spring of the year, when unleavened bread was eaten in celebration. Seven weeks later, the termination of the wheat harvest provided another occasion for a thank-offering. These constituted the three main festivals of the agricultural religion.

Sacrifices were elaborate and essential in the cult of Baalism. The temples provided one room for the sacrifice proper, rooms where the food would be eaten, accommodations for the priests, and a roofless enclosure which was considered very sacred. Two meanings can be attached to the sacrifices. They may be looked upon as a taboo-removing gift to the deity for his favors: a choice part of the produce or the first-fruits of animals and trees (and sometimes children) were dutifully

returned ; at first the devotees thought he actually ate the food but later they deemed it sufficient for him to inhale the fragrance of the smoke. A second significance of sacrifice is that of sharing a meal with the deity : part of it is burned for the deity ; the priest eats his portion ; the family eats its portion ; and thus a bond is created which intimately unites the deity with the worshipper.

With this importance attached to sacrifices, an elaborate priesthood became necessary, a necessary evil perhaps. Besides sacrifices, they busied themselves with the performance of magic, the attempt to consult with the dead, and they coped with a whole realm of demons—all of which constituted further elements in the land's religion.

"Seers" were in great vogue : they were regarded as gifted men who could predict the future. The desire to know what tomorrow will bring was no less keen then than it is now ; the ability to divine the future was no less profitable than it is now. A variety of devices was employed. It was not uncommon for "seers" to observe the flight of birds, or to notice the color and movements of an animal that was sacrificed, or to study the shape a drop of oil assumed in a pitcher of water, or to consult some specific oracle, as revealing the future. Men so gifted with prognosticative insight must stand close to the deity : they were called men of God. Hence, the diviner and the priest were usually combined in the same person (the Hebrew word for "priest"—Cohen—means "diviner" in Arabic).

Finally, there was the queer practice which we have come to call "ecstatic prophecy," according to which an individual, very likely of unbalanced mind, danced himself into a state of frenzy, whirled, staggered, until, beyond himself and exhausted, he sputtered inarticulate sounds. Such unearthly behavior was proof that a supernatural power from without was taking possession of the prophet's body, to reveal through his disconnected ravings the things that are hidden. So, at least, the Canaanites thought.

Once in Canaan, the Israelites did as the Canaanites. Settled on fertile land, they became farmers. Having become

farmers, a new occupation for them, they had to learn the methods of agriculture. The methods of agriculture included not only a knowledge of the use of the simple implements and of the care of the soil but also a knowledge of the religious ritual without which all other efforts would fail. We can almost hear the counsel of the Canaanites, that the Hebrews must worship the local gods if they want prosperity. The Hebrews were alert pupils. The Bible is crowded with evidence of how much of the primitive tradition, folk-lore and language of the Canaanites they took over. Not many seasons passed before they were worshipping Baal, with his train of accessories: the Bamoth, the Asherah, the Mazebah, the Gilgal, the images, the three agricultural festivals, the sacrificial cult, the organized priesthood, the diviners and the ecstatic prophets.

Baal and Yahweh thus dwelt side by side. Yahweh—the Hebrews fancied—wouldn't mind, because He, after all, was not an agricultural god, nor was His home Canaan.

#### II. YAHWISM VERSUS BAALISM, AND THEIR PROPHETIC CONTESTANTS

BUT the two did not long continue together. Yahweh proved His superiority in the political crises during the time of the Judges. Baal could not ward off the dangers of invasion; Yahweh could. A series of decisive events in the Canaanite career of the Israelite people succeeded in squelching Baalism and the same turn of events led the people onto new grounds of religious discovery.

The first major episode was that of Deborah. Deborah, who had gained a wide reputation as a diviner, was inspired in a moment of national danger—when it seemed that the Canaanites would surely crush the separated tribes of Israel—to arouse six of the tribes, to call them together in the name of Yahweh, the God of might, and then to lead them to victory; in this single moment of her life Deborah proved herself more than a diviner. She was a prophetess. Historically decisive was this religiously inspired achievement. It so hap-

pened that the Canaanite confederacy outnumbered the Israelite tribes and, with their superior organization, chose to wait for the Israelites to make the first move. The latter seized the opportunity when they saw it. A heavy rainstorm broke and overflowed the River Kishon. This propitious moment the Israelites seized upon to attack the Canaanites who were encumbered and handicapped because of their heavier armor, and for the same reason were thwarted in their panicky retreat. Again it was nature — a power greater than man — that created the opportunity.

As a result of the amazing victory, the north of Palestine passed into possession of the Israelite tribes while the Canaanites were now reduced to a subordinate position. The six tribes which shared the glory were brought closer together. This proved the first positive step toward forming the Israelite nation, and toward strengthening the Israelite religion as well.

Precisely what was the effect upon the religion? Prior to the battle, the Israelites had observed their neighbors call on their gods for help in time of war, and now they too looked for some deity to help them. Whipped into action by Deborah, the Hebrews therefore turned once again to Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts, whose aid — through a phenomenon of nature — had made possible the escape from Egypt — and the forces of nature did indeed again bring victory. Yahweh's supremacy was demonstrated even in Canaan, and a mighty argument that was for the fusion of the gods which the separate tribes retained as their individual deities — and rival deities, at that.

A century and a half later, when the greater danger of the Philistine oppression threatened to crush the life of Israel, Samuel, a small-town diviner or "seer," anointed Saul as king and leader in the defense against the Philistines. He inspired Saul to achieve a measure of success in the name of Yahweh; in this single episode of his life Samuel proved himself more than a "seer." He too was a prophet.

It was David who made complete the defeat of the Philistines. It was David who welded all the tribes into a national

unit. It was David who fused the religion of the separate tribes into a national religion. This double syncretization took expression in David's prize conquest: Jerusalem. Jerusalem he made the national capital as well as the national sanctuary, made it the home of the holy Ark. David now established the supremacy of Yahweh, for — according to ancient theology — when a people conquers a land, its deity conquers the gods of the land. It was, indeed, the religion of Israel — the inspiration of Yahweh — which enabled Israel to win and possess a homeland.

The triumph of Yahweh was, alas, only nominal. Baal worship continued under a different name. It continued in the name of Yahweh. Yahwism, in the course of events, had embraced Baalism. The masses saw nothing wrong in this. They innocently adapted for the worship of Yahweh their old sanctuaries and festivals and sacrifices. Inasmuch as Yahweh possessed the land He may indeed have been called a Baal. This we can suppose from the fact that even Saul and Jonathan, devotees of Yahweh, gave to their children names with a "baal" ending (Ishbaal, Meribbaal).

David's court included a royal "seer," Nathan, who functioned in prognosticating the failure or success of a move for war and acted also the part of politician, having advocated the claim of Solomon to succeed David. In these regards Nathan was no different from the average court "seer." One experience, however, raised him to the level of prophecy. It was when David, apparently not satisfied with the contents of his harem, took Bathsheba to wife and conveniently sent her husband, Horiah the Hittite, to his death in battle. Nathan immediately recognized this act as contrary to the democratic standards which Israel had brought as a heritage from the desert. He cast caution to the winds. At the possible risk of his life, Nathan took a stand in opposition to his absolute monarch and dauntlessly he denounced this crime of David. Conscious of his position as spokesman of Yahweh, Nathan accused David of sinning not only against Horiah, but against the very God of Israel. By this rebuke, and the connotation that he added, Nathan articulated the new truth that God de-

mands moral conduct, demands it even of a monarch. In this, Nathan gave a higher meaning to the idea of prophecy and of religion.

King Solomon, following his father David, continued to centralize the nation and the religion. For the first time, the people enjoyed peace long enough to devote their energies to tilling the soil. The surplus produce they accumulated gave rise to barter and the resultant commerce. Commerce took Israelites to foreign lands, whilst it brought foreigners, princesses in particular, to the land of Israel. In this dual fashion, foreign extravagances crept into the religion of Israel. The foreign princesses were given costly accommodation for themselves and temples for their gods. Not to be out-templed, Solomon reared a Temple worthy of the dignity of Israel.

This new vogue failed to meet the approval of the Yahwists—as we might conveniently designate them—those who fondly recalled the happy days of the simple life and the simple worship of Yahweh. There were stirrings amongst the people. Men were saying to themselves that this was not the life their fathers had lived. Oh, for the old days of the desert, those remote days of the past, when every one was your equal, when democracy prevailed, when sexual purity was maintained, when luxuries were few and taxes were slight—Oh, for the good old days!

The discontent reached its climax in the open rebellion, after Solomon's death. The kingdom was divided in two. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, remained with the loyal tribes in the south, as the King of Judah. Jeroboam—favorite of the Yahwists—became king of the ten seceding tribes, henceforth called the Kingdom of Israel.

Jeroboam proved disappointing; he reverted to the old Baal-mixture of Yahweh worship, re-emphasizing the importance of the old sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel in preference to that of Jerusalem, reverting to the use of household images (Teraphim) and a hill-idol and all the pomp and degradation of the local shrines. The Yahwists expressed their disappointment by overthrowing him. With succeeding monarchs,

matters grew worse. Intrigue and corruption were precipitating a crisis.

The loyalist Kingdom of Judah included much of the pastoral section of Canaan. It was therefore relatively free from many of the Baalistic excesses of the agricultural north. Here the Yahwists were able to make some headway. They influenced Asa (Rehoboam's grandson) to remove his mother from office and the idols she had set up, to purify the Temple, and to renew the Covenant with Yahweh. What were the contents of the renewed Covenant? Those of the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, scholars now theorize, since the details of that chapter reflect this period of Israel's history. The theory holds, further, that this very first reformation in the Jewish religion created the first document (K) of the Hexateuch, and that later similar reformations brought into being the later documents and Codes—to constitute the Books of Moses and Joshua. So the Bible began.

The Yahwists may have indeed succeeded with their reformation, because we hear nothing more of them until the time of Isaiah, some hundred and seventy-five years later. That is, nothing more in the south.

In the north, conditions were different. Both in location and disposition the north was open to influences alien to themselves. Here the strength of the Omri dynasty brought economic prosperity reminiscent of the glamorous days of Solomon. Commercial treaties again became necessary. Ahab, of the Omri dynasty, married Jezebel of Phœnicia. And then the trouble began. With her, Jezebel brought her inseparable Baal, Melkart of Sidon, for whom a temple now, of course, had to be built in Samaria. Foreign cults were thus encouraged to flourish freely. Imagine the outraged feelings of the staunch defenders of the religion of Yahweh!

The Yahwists now consisted of three groups: the Nazirites, the Rechabites, the "ecstatic prophets." The Nazirites protested against the lax living of their day: this protest they emphasized by a severe vow to abstain from whatever might be conducive to the abominations of Canaan; it is recorded

that they refrained from drinking wine and from cutting their hair. The Rechabites, who may have included the Kenite element of the Hebrew population (though it is stated that Jonadab ben Rechab founded the movement), idealized the pastoral life of the nomad — where wealth is not amassed, corruption cannot enter; when wine is not drunk, moral excesses are avoided; if the dwelling is no more than a tent, movable in a day, decay cannot set in — and the Rechabite movement agitated not for political freedom nor for national glory but for ethical emancipation. The third group devoted to Yahweh, “ecstatic prophets,” sought to employ their well-known frenzied powers to create zealots for Yahweh. The Yahwists were out for action.

In Ahab’s day the decision had to be made, once for all. Either Yahweh or Baal. The urgency of the need required one who was prepared fearlessly and decisively to make a stand. Elijah the Tishbite of Gilead was prepared. As recorded in the Bible (I Kings 18), Elijah dramatically demonstrated that Yahweh, and Yahweh alone, is the God of all nature. And on another occasion Elijah went out of his way to drive home the conviction that Yahweh is likewise a God who demands righteous conduct. That was when King Ahab found it difficult to acquire Naboth’s desired vineyard. Taking matters into her unscrupulous hands, Queen Jezebel brought false charges against Naboth and had him executed. Then Elijah, a man whose life was already in jeopardy, confronted the monarch, pointed a menacing finger at Ahab and threatened (I Kings 21: 19): “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.”

Throughout his life, Elijah vigorously opposed injustice, inequality, immorality; in this regard he was superior to the earlier prophets, for their recorded activity was confined to but a single event. Elijah differed from them further in that he was no professional “seer”; he was a shepherd by trade but a prophet by conviction, compelled by an inner urge to denounce the very king. With faith in the truth of his mes-



sage, Elijah stood his ground alone—heralding a new era in religious leadership. Little wonder that Elijah is immortalized in Jewish history as Eliyahu ha-Nabi, the beloved hero.

Elijah's results were not permanent. His successor, Elisha, determined to make them permanent. But Elisha misinterpreted his task. He thought he could purify the religion through the simple device of inciting Jehu to murder Jezebel together with the Baal worshippers and thus to uproot the idolatry. Elisha was mistaken. Wholesale murder in the name of religion is unpardonable. It is a distortion of the very name of religion. Not the death of the sinner is desired but that he repent of his sin, and live. As a matter of historic fact, following the bloody revolution, when King Jehu set up the new dynasty, Israel wallowed in a degradation no less abominable than that of Jezebel's régime. Yet, a better day was coming. Elijah had started something. Forces were at work, destined to create giants of the soul.

## 12. GIANTS OF THE SOUL

AMOS, whom we may date at about 760 B.C.E., is the first among the giants of the soul, known to the world as "literary prophets." His appearance marks a new epoch in the religious evolution of Israel, in which latent and untapped energies are released and which, for more than three centuries, shapes the Hebrew religion into a higher creation—a unique form of Ethical Monotheism.

We call these prophets "literary prophets" because we have the words they actually spoke and wrote or had written down for them. We can go to the Bible and read them. Another reason for designating them literary prophets is to distinguish them from the professional prophets who preceded them, the diviners and the crazed ecstatic babblers—who could "prophecy" the future. Right at the start, Amos made this quite clear. When someone in his day dared call him a prophet he replied indignantly: "I am no prophet nor a disciple of a prophet" (Amos 7 : 14). Truly spoken, for Amos' prophecy

was not limited to the immediate turn of events; it reached out to generations unborn, his words vibrating through the centuries.

The conditions prevailing during the period of the literary prophets were most distressing. The social order was rotting. The rotting began on top. The upper set showed the worst example. Intrigue, quarrels, murder. The humble farmer was exploited, first impoverished and then enslaved. The rich creditor joined field to field; his monopoly grew. In the cities there were debauchery and greed. Merchants in the market-place tampered with the weights and measures. The poor, the oppressed and the exploited cried piteously and unavailingly for justice. To this dismal picture the advance of the mighty Assyrian army gave the finishing touch.

Why then should spiritual giants have arisen at such a time? Why, in the midst of such degradation? We might as well ask why a lily of clearest beauty grows out of the mire. . . Why? Perhaps the lives of the prophets will tell.

Born in Tekoa, a village in the bleak wilderness of Judah, Amos spent part of the year protecting his desert sheep from the attacks of wild beasts, and part of the year dressing small fig-trees. The severe simplicity of his life opened his eyes to the injustice and idolatry of the cities. When he could endure the ugly spectacle no longer, the urge came to him to betake himself to the royal northern sanctuary at Bethel to speak his heart to the assembled festive throng. "The Lord took me," he says, "as I followed the flock, and said unto me, go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7 : 15). Amos was reluctant to go. But he was overwhelmed by the thought that it was God compelling him. "The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3 : 8).

Imagine the astonishment of the assemblage at hearing this Judean shepherd jeer at their worship, declaring in God's name, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me the burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not

hear the melody of your viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream!" (Amos 5 : 21-24). What does he know? — the audience may well have challenged — the Syrians have been defeated; the land under King Jeroboam II is prosperous; why, the Day of the Lord is near! Beware of the Day of the Lord! — Amos thundered — the Assyrian army will sweep over the land and decimate the people. It was because Amos loved his fellow-men that he spoke harsh words — he sounded the alarm that the people might repent before it was too late.\*

But the people did not repent. Forty years later, Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom. Amos was right. He had found a key to the riddle of the universe! The rise and fall of nations are not accidental. There is a purpose behind it all. Righteousness and wickedness are contributing forces.

Amos struck the keynote of the new prophetic epoch when he proclaimed Yahweh the One Universal Ruler of mankind, who guides the destiny not only of Israel but also of the Philistines and the Arameans — yes, and of the black-skinned Ethiopians too: in short, of the whole world, so far as Amos knew it. Henceforth we are justified in speaking of the deity not as Yahweh, the protector solely of Israel, but as God, Lord of the Universe! Not that God was suddenly created out of Yahweh, but that the intrepid exploration of Amos into the vastness of spiritual reality brought to humanity a glimpse of the true nature of God. Even as millions of stars known to astronomers in our day, and seen by them through the instrumentality of the latest perfection in telescopes, existed and twinkled and moved in their celestial courses fifty years ago when, by reason of the weaker instruments, they could not be

\* In an interesting study (Hebrew Union College Annual, 1936), Julian Morgenstern indicates that an earthquake at Bethel, on New Year's Day exactly two years after Amos spoke his prophecy of doom, led to the erroneous impression that the earthquake completed the predicted punishment, and probably that Amos then set his prophecy in permanent written form to emphasize that the real punishment for the unabating sinfulness of the nation was yet to come. Hence, the beginning of written prophecy. If that be so, we have here further evidence of how acts of nature — an earthquake once more — molded the religion.

seen or known, precisely so, the feeble and false notions of divinity proved stepping stones to truth, to the true God, the Ancient of Days, whose more accurate discovery awaited the greater knowledge and the keener vision of man.

Here we have no philosophically thought-out ascertainment of Monotheism. It is a Monotheism which grew out of practical circumstances. What specific event brought to Amos this tremendous understanding of God—that God rules all peoples, not one pet nation? Perhaps, the division of the Hebrews into two kingdoms elicited the inescapable realization that if Yahweh can be the God of two nations He can likewise be God of all the nations. Perhaps, the awareness that Yahweh demands justice evoked the corollary thought that if God is just He will not favor one nation only, especially if that nation is sinful. What gives especial value to Amos' revelation is the insistence that Yahweh not only rules the entire world but that He rules it in justice! God therefore requires justice of man.

This combined teaching impressed upon the Hebrew religion its distinctive and ineradicable stamp: Ethical Monotheism—namely, one God of all that is, whose very nature demands ethical living.

A third noteworthy element in Amos' message is his contention that sacrifice and ceremonies and ritual cannot displace justice. Without justice, they are empty; God does not want them.

In the fourth place, injustice and wrongdoing undermine the strength of the people, leading to their ultimate collapse; the result is inevitable. But the inevitability of destruction, Amos finally emphasizes, can be checked not through tearful last-minute pleadings, but only through sincere repentance and a change of conduct.

A spiritual summit had been reached by Amos. But he, single-handed, could not lead the whole people with him to his level. His words would have ended in mere words, and civilization would have been the poorer, had not other prophets followed Amos to the same altitude. Their personal experiences revealed to them the same majestic truths which

Amos had uttered. Not by rote did they speak, nor in any bookish manner. Rising from diverse stations and circumstances in life, they were independently impelled to yet the same understanding of God and man, one prophet thus confirming the discoveries of the other. Each, of course, expressed his own personality : each had his own peculiar style, his own shade of meaning, his own emphasis. The same religious gem, as it were, was held up to the light at different angles to capture an added glow and an unexpected depth.

Unlike Amos in nearly every regard — excepting that he too is ranked a literary prophet — was Hosea who lived a generation or so after Amos. By vocation a priest in the Northern Kingdom, Hosea was the only Northern Kingdom prophet whose writings we have. In the crowded city life, not in the open spaces, did he receive his enlightening experience. His beloved wife, Gomer, had deserted him ; years later he chanced to recognize her in the market-place, offered as a slave, to which low state she had drifted. By the rules of strict justice she deserved what was coming to her. But, strange, no rancor rankled within Hosea's breast. He paid the price asked, fifteen pieces of silver and some barley and wine, took his faithless wife back home and forgave Gomer her injury to him. Compassion, he saw, is stronger even than revenge or the desire for retribution. With the enlightenment of sudden discovery, this private sorrow translated itself in Hosea's mind into terms of Israel's faithlessness to God.

With what pathos Hosea pictures the words of God, a loving Father :

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him,  
And from Egypt I called him to be My son.  
The more I called to them, the farther they went from Me.  
They to the Baalim kept sacrificing and to images offering  
incense.  
Yet I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms ;  
But they knew not that I healed them” (Hosea 11 : 1-3).

Notwithstanding Israel's misbehavior, God's love endures. God is like man in that He has the power to love, but He is

unlike man in that His love is perfect — inexhaustible. To err is human, to forgive is divine. If man, puny and weak, if man forgives, God decidedly must have mercy and He must forgive. The opportunity is ever present for man to repent, namely, to “return” to the Lord, with “love and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6 : 6). Hosea’s great contribution is his emphasis on mercy and forgiveness wherewith to temper justice. With Hosea we likewise witness a struggle to free religion from the gross sexuality which attached to the Baal-cult — “I am God, and not man : the Holy One is in the midst of thee” (Hosea 11 : 9) — while at the same time giving a divine status to human love. To Amos’ appeal for fairness, justice and righteousness, Hosea adds his own plea for purity, knowledge, loyalty and love.

Isaiah of Jerusalem, whose writings are found in the first thirty-nine chapters of the Book of Isaiah, reveals yet another facet in the gem of prophecy. Unlike either Amos or Hosea, he held a high position in the king’s court, where he made his influence felt for nearly half a century — the latter half of the important eighth century B.C.E. Like his predecessors, Isaiah vociferates a complaint against the social ills of his day, against the haughty daughters of Zion who “walk with outstretched neck and ogling eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and tinkling with their feet” (Isaiah 3 : 16), wasting their lives and their ill-gotten wealth on frivolity; a complaint against unjust judges; against hypocrites; against soothsayers, sorcerers, wizards, necromancers; against the whole idolatry of worship. Old complaints, these.

Isaiah’s personal participation in the two political crises, that of 734 B.C.E. and that of 701, leads him into unexplored channels of religious discovery. On both occasions he regards entangling alien alliances insufficient for his nation’s security : nothing is secure other than God and what God stands for in life — the righteous living which mobilizes the nation’s resources and strength. Subsequent events establish the truth of Isaiah’s contention, that in politics, in the government of the country, broad religious motives and broad religious influences should be allowed to dominate. Should religion be divorced

from affairs of the state? When diplomacy breaks down under the pressure of man's duplicity, when office-seekers and office-holders are motivated by personal ambition, when the morale of a people is shattered and standards crumble, *should* religion be divorced from affairs of the state? Isaiah gives an unmistakable answer. Religion exalts a nation in righteousness: religion is indispensable in national life.

While assuring his fellow Judeans that God will bring woe to the nation for its sins, using Assyria as His instrument, Isaiah yet holds out the hope of a "righteous remnant" who will in the end return to God, to be God's witnesses on earth. The remnant dedicated to God will be sanctified only by learning to live the exemplary life, since God's holiness is moral, not ritualistic. With a clarity and an intensity never before attained, Isaiah proclaims that the whole earth is full of God's glory, that the God of Israel is the God of the Universe; whatever special relationship exists between God and Israel is for the benefit of the world, since through Israel, through the teaching and example of Israel, God will become acknowledged throughout the world.

Isaiah pictures the day when the ideal people, Israel, will have an ideal king — a Messiah (Messiah means "the anointed," and since the coronation of all Hebrew kings was by anointment with oil, they were, in a sense, all Messiahs) — a descendant of David, upon whom the spirit of God rests, in whom there is wisdom and virtue, who will not engage in war but will destroy the very materials of war. Seeking primarily to create a new world of truth and justice, the Messiah will rule in reverence of the Lord, to the end that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11: 9). At various times in the history of Judaism it was believed that the promised Messiah had at last arrived; yet the hope of an ideal world is still a hope for Israel. And its majestic portrayal is the crown of Isaiah's achievement.

Isaiah lived to see the unheeded warnings of his own prophecies, likewise those of Amos and Hosea, fulfilled in the Northern Kingdom. In 722 B.C.E. the Assyrian army cap-

tured Samaria and dealt the Northern Kingdom its death-blow. The refusal to listen to prophetic advice had sealed its doom. In the natural sequelae of defeat, the Israelites of the north lost their identity. It is likely that some escaped and merged with their kith and kin in Judah, that a number were lost in the melting-pot of captivity, that many merged with the imported heathen settlers to constitute the "Samaritans"—a half-breed, half-Jewish and half-idolatrous, amalgam. But of the Kingdom of Israel we hear no more. Only the Kingdom of Judah remained.

Had also the Kingdom of Judah been destroyed at the same time, there would be no Judaism in the world today—and perhaps no Christianity or Mohammedanism either. But a miracle of history—some prefer to call it a coincidence—took place. Forces of nature again intervened. When, following the northern victory, the invincible Assyrian army was on the point of attacking the southern Kingdom of Judah, a plague broke out in the Assyrian ranks, and mighty Assyria was compelled to withdraw. Judah was thus saved for another century and a quarter. During that century and a quarter, history-making energies were released. More prophets arose, to reënforce the work of Isaiah and his predecessors, to drive into the hearts of the people the conviction that they, the Jews of Judah, were especially chosen by God to survive and live on for the purpose of bringing true religion to mankind. They did indeed seem destined to live on!

### 13. HISTORY, THE LABORATORY OF RELIGION

ONE of the first to reënforce the idea of true religion was Micah of Moresheth. Living in the Shefelah, he must have witnessed the triumphant Assyrian hordes marching from ruined Samaria toward Egypt. This sight alone would be enough to arouse him, even at the cost of his life, to rail against the iniquities of his day. Himself a farmer, Micah feelingly spoke of the doom of grasping landlords, bribed judges and extortionist tax collectors. What particularly



goaded his anger was the complacent assurance of these exploiters that no evil could come to them so long as they carried out their sacrificial obligations. Religion without decent conduct, he corrected them, is not religion. Do you want to know what religion is?

“He hath shown thee, O man, what is good ;  
And what doth the Lord require of thee  
But to do justly, and to love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6 : 8).

The magnificent precepts of Micah and Isaiah, coupled with the dreadful example of the Northern disaster, induced Hezekiah, King of Judah, to undertake religious reforms. He removed the idolatrous “high places,” broke the images, devastated the degrading groves, smashed the Nehushtan (brazen serpent), closed down provincial sanctuaries and centralized worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The reformation did not prove as thorough as it should have been. At the very first opportunity reaction set in. That was when Manasseh succeeded his father Hezekiah. The waves of reaction swept the people back, even beyond their former aberrations. Outlying sanctuaries were reopened, impurities in worship reappeared. Children were subjected to an ordeal of fire! Copies of Assyrian corruptions! Assyria’s increasing hold on Judah brought a new array of foreign idolatries into the land; because of Assyria’s superior might in battle, superiority was foolishly attributed to its astral gods. King Manasseh raised no objections. On the contrary, anyone who dared protest was silenced with death; tradition relates that the prophet Isaiah was among those cruelly exterminated. Such tyranny tended to drive the prophetic work underground. This accounts for the absence of the names of prophets in the first half of the seventh century B.C.E.

The prophet Zephaniah gives us a vivid account of those miserable days in a message directed against the new-fangled idolatry; his contribution, in the evolution of prophecy, is an

insistence on humble and patient waiting as a requisite of religion . . . not to lose heart.

An accidental discovery rewarded the patient waiting of the prophetic group. In the year 621 B.C.E., King Josiah was carrying out some Temple repairs. Shaphan, his secretary, was on his way to draw money from the Temple-repairs subscription-chest when he was greeted by the priest Hilkiah with the information that a long-lost Book of Moses' Law had been discovered in the course of the renovation. This unearthed document may have truly originated with Moses, and perhaps at the time of King Manasseh's recklessness was hidden in the Temple for safe-keeping (if so, we have here our first instance of archæological excavation). But many Bible scholars are inclined to think it was composed not very long before it was found and that it was deliberately given the semblance of Mosaic commands in order to guarantee it a good reception, or simply because the author felt he was writing in the spirit of Moses and gave Moses the credit for his inspiration, or a third possibility is that the material did go back to Moses and that the finders only retouched it for the specific needs and advanced ideas of the day.

The discovered Book of the Law we now know as the Biblical Book of Deuteronomy! Consistently it emphasizes that even as there is but one God so there should be but one sanctuary, in Jerusalem; consistently it opposes oppression and tyranny, while stressing God's justice and love and universality—the very ideas of the prophets of this era! The Book of Deuteronomy, in translating spiritual aims into practical demands, is an embodiment of the spirit of the prophets.

With what consummate genius the thought of the One God, who is to be loved and obeyed, is breathed into the words: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" (Dt. 6: 4-7). The universalization of God may have begun with

prophetic utterances, but this Book of Law for the people transforms those utterances into an accepted doctrine of Judaism, the cornerstone, in fact, of the religion.

The prophetic protest against idolatry is paralleled by the Deuteronomic verse: "And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place" (Dt. 12: 3). A central sanctuary at Jerusalem lending itself to close supervision, would keep idolatries out of the religion. Moreover, restricting the priesthood to the descendants of the Levite tribe would provide an added safeguard to the purity of the worship.

"Love ye therefore the strangers, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Dt. 10: 19) — is an interpretation of Israel's history which is indeed expressive of the prophetic spirit.

Because of these several characteristics it is believed that the Book of Deuteronomy was secretly written by the silenced prophets of Manasseh's dictatorial reign and deposited in the Temple to await an opportune discovery. The discovery was opportune: widespread humanitarian and ecclesiastical reforms in the spirit of Deuteronomy were forthwith enacted, alien cults were wiped out, extraneous and illegal altars overthrown.

Unhappily, the prophetic efforts were doomed to an early demise with good King Josiah's death twelve years later. How natural, after this disappointment, for the prophet Habakkuk to question God why He allows the wicked to swallow up the righteous. In this challenge Habakkuk projects the fundamental problem of religion. It is a problem which arises out of the contradiction between the teaching of the eighth-century prophets that God is just and merciful, as contrasted with the bitterness of life's pain and disappointment. Why should undeserved suffering be meted out to the righteous? Why! From the prophet's inmost soul comes God's reply: "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2: 4). Ultimately

justice will triumph. Faith, that faith which demands confidence and patience, is life-sustaining, regardless of life's hazards. Here wē have the product of Habakkuk's genius! But we have not heard the end of the perplexing problem. It will appear again.

Less of a genius and more of the average human being was the prophet Nahum, whose words are believed to have been spoken at this latter part of the seventh century B.C.E. Dramatic events were following one upon the other. Assyria, the dreaded lion of Mesopotamia, despoiler of Israel, Assyria the strong, weakened with startling suddenness. Triumphant Babylonia vanquished proud Nineveh. Revenge to the oppressor. How wonderful! Wonderful, yes—when judged by the frail human desire for revenge, which frailty Nahum exhibits. Not all prophets were of the same spiritual stature. We might be lenient with Nahum on the grounds that he was gratified not over the destruction of Assyria but over the fulfillment of prophecy, to teach the Jews a needed lesson which would bring them to a truer understanding of God and the way of the world. Still, compare Nahum with Jeremiah!

In the short-lived reformation of King Josiah, Jeremiah had taken an active interest. He, a priest, had helped abolish the prohibited sanctuaries of his native Anathoth with such zeal as to incur the ill-will of his townsmen. And then, so soon, after all the high hopes of the reformation, came the reaction—the same old abominable idolatry. Jeremiah was set furiously thinking: surely there is no value to a reformation which can be upset so easily. A lifetime of critical experiences, reflecting deeply in his bosom, brought to Jeremiah a response startling in its revelation of truth. To him came the realization that religious observance cannot be superimposed if there is not the inner impulse to obey; religion is not external, but dwells in the heart of man. God is in man. Man requires no go-between. In the ideal future, the moral Law will be enforced not from without but by the desire of man's own heart and mind. Here we have the pinnacle of prophetic vision:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they broke; . . . but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my Law in their inward parts, and upon their hearts will I write it; and I shall be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31: 31-34).

Poor Jeremiah: the people would not believe him. His were unpopular prophecies; what was worse, his was the misfortune that they did not come true in the immediate future. His prediction that Judah would be destroyed for its sins fell through when the threatening Scythian invasion failed to materialize. He was laughed at. The people did not understand that a prophet is not a fortune-teller of what will happen on the morrow. But Jeremiah was not daunted. He knew that punishment must come as the inevitable result of sinfulness, as certainly as night must follow day. He knew that the doom of Judah was sealed—the evil day will arrive, sooner or later. This Jeremiah knew because he stood close to God. He believed in what theologians call the "immanence" of God, the direct and intimate presence of God. Frequently Jeremiah stood alone with God, so unpopular was he with man. For Jeremiah, it was inward religion that counted, personal and individual faith—each individual suffers for his own sins—God welcomes everyone to Himself, even the gentile. To one of this temperament, the worship of the Temple recedes into a position of secondary or tertiary importance.

Jeremiah stands supreme not only because he came upon great truths, but because he dared live and die for his convictions, thereby demonstrating the strength of his religion. He was beaten; he was put in stocks; he was seized by the mob;

he was thrown into a dungeon ; he was lowered into an underground cistern ; twice he escaped a lynching ; finally he was dragged to an unknown end in Egypt. Did he swerve from his conviction ? In the very gate of the Temple, Jeremiah admonished the worshippers that the presence of the Temple in Jerusalem is no security that God will defend Judah from destruction : lying words and disgusting deeds have made of the Temple a den of robbers. With all his might he begged the rulers not to ally with Egypt against Babylonia — be prudent and submit to Babylonia, he urged, and do not throw away your life on the battlefield ; there is more constructive patriotism, to remove evil and wrong from the land. Afraid to express his conviction ? Not in the least. To show those who still could not understand, Jeremiah smashed a jug in their presence : into so many pieces would Judah be smashed. For days he wore a wooden yoke about his neck : to the rulers he said, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live" (Jer. 27 : 12). At the very end, when destruction was imminent, he purchased at full value some Judean land, to symbolize his confidence that after the people will have suffered for their sins, God will restore them to Judah.

Jeremiah's pleadings fell on deaf ears, but history, the laboratory of religion, proved the truth of his words. In 586 B.C.E., the walls of Jerusalem were battered down, the Temple was burnt, the people routed. Some escaped to Egypt. The upper classes were led in captivity to Babylonia. And Jeremiah recorded the depth of his grief in the poetry of the Book of Lamentations, poetry which is still read in synagogues on the anniversary of the tragic day.

#### 14. A SECOND EXODUS AND AGAIN A GENESIS

JUDAISM — the religion of Judah — in exile is now faced with a vital challenge. Can it survive without the Temple ? Can it survive outside the territory of Judah ? Can it survive amidst the mingling of Babylonian peoples and religions ? Can Judaism survive despite God's seeming neglect of the Jews ?

Judaism did survive. The efforts of the earlier prophets were not in vain. Ezekiel too, formerly a Temple-priest and now an exile in Babylonia, was in no small measure responsible for the survival. He had a reply to the new religious problems. The nation was exiled because of its sins. But God still cares for the individual soul, quite apart from the nation. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezek. 18: 20, 21). Even the nation will be forgiven its sins and will not die, if it remain loyal to God in a land of new idolatrous and immoral temptations. God will restore the nation. He must—for the sake of His reputation, His honor. God must show His power is not limited. Yes, in Babylonia He will assemble the scattered dry bones of Judah and breathe fresh life into them and reestablish the nation and Temple in Palestine.

To Ezekiel, God seemed of transcendent power and holiness. So insignificant did he consider man in comparison to God that whenever he felt God speaking to him he would hide his face in humility. When a message of God rushed in upon him, he would hear the voice addressing him, "Son of Man," as though to single him out as far beneath the divine. What a contrast to Jeremiah's intimacy with God! The transcendence of God impressed upon Ezekiel the responsibility of every individual to his Maker. So distant, in fact, is God that He can be approached only through an elaborate ritual. So holy is God that He must be worshipped with resplendent ceremonial. There will be a fearful destruction, after which the Almighty will be proclaimed King, Israel will be gathered, a Prince of David will lead them as a shepherd; in the restored Temple the descendants of Zadok will be the priests and the other Levites will assist in offering suitable obeisance to the Almighty. The Temple will be the

center of a theocratic state—a Holy Nation. The city will be called “The-Lord-is-There,” and there will God be sanctified in the sight of many nations.

Ezekiel’s solution to the religious difficulties of Judah may not satisfy us today. But it served the purpose for his day.

It was inevitable that a certain number of Jews would be engulfed in the Babylonian environment. The majority of them, however, whilst they took on the trading habits of the Babylonians, deliberately resisted the influence of the Babylonian gods: Marduk, Bel, Gad, Meni. Here by the rivers of Babylon the faithful wept when they remembered Zion. With determination they vowed: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psalm 137: 5, 6).

No longer in possession of the Temple, where alone sacrifices could be offered, it became necessary to stress the other observances of the religion, especially in the exile where it was essential to maintain the exclusiveness and the distinctiveness of Judaism. Added importance was therefore attached to the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, the laws of food and of ritual cleanliness. Small audiences would gather in Ezekiel’s home to listen to his instruction. In all likelihood, the groups would chant the songs of the Temple which they knew so well and would read the Law of Moses and listen for words of encouragement. These are the gatherings which Ezekiel may have implied when he spoke of the “little sanctuary.” Here are the roots of a new religious experience, the synagogue, which later far surpassed the Temple in importance. In the course of the centuries, the synagogue developed into the central institution of Judaism and the prototype of the church in Christianity.

Thus, the First Exile of the Jews, which in effect was a Second Exodus, served again as a starting point for a new stage in the evolution of Judaism. At times of greatest crisis, it seems, the necessities of adjustment energized into being



new creations, new institutions, new practices and a new understanding of the mystery of life.

Ezekiel, we have seen, was a unique combination of priest and prophet; in addition to giving expression to his prophetically stimulated imagination he engaged in a priestly compilation of the old ritual for future use in the rebuilt Temple — which he confidently expected before long — and in a didactic revision of the historic documents of the Bible. But in breadth of spiritual vision Ezekiel's fame pales alongside the splendor of another prophet of the exile.

This other prophet of the exile came upon religious truths of the highest value and these truths he expressed in language of utmost beauty. Strange is the fate of history that we know nothing of the life of this poet-prophet, the greatest of all the prophets; we are not even sure of his name. All we know is that he lived during the period of the exile, at about 540 B.C.E., and that his writings were appended to those of Isaiah of Jerusalem, covering Chapters 40 to 55 in the Book of Isaiah. It may be that his name too was Isaiah and that the confusion of the two Isaiahs led to a joining of the two prophets. For convenience, we designate the great unknown prophet: Deutero-Isaiah (the Second Isaiah).

Thirty years separated Deutero-Isaiah from Ezekiel. Thirty years of exile. Thirty years of waiting for the glorious restoration Ezekiel had promised. Thirty years of disappointment. Thirty years of increasing sense of sinfulness, self-blame, sadness. If ever the people needed a guiding star, it was then. He — Deutero-Isaiah — came; he brightened the gloom. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" (Isaiah 40: 1), announced his throbbing message from God. Double the extent of their sins had they suffered; now they were forgiven. They must have faith in God; they must hope; they must understand that suffering is not necessarily punishment for sin, as Ezekiel and the others had told them, but suffering purifies. Hardships soften one. They were being refined in the crucible of life; they were being sanctified for their rôle in history as servants of the Lord. They were suffering for

the sake of others. Their suffering was vicarious. But why write words so prosaic when we can read in the four "Servant Songs" what Isaiah himself teaches in poetry of unexcelled magnificence?

The first Song (Isaiah 42 : 1-7, as given in the Jewish translation) proclaims God's choice of Israel as the servant, and the service that God requires :

"Behold My servant, whom I uphold ;  
Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth ;  
I have put My spirit upon him,  
He shall make the right to go forth to the nations.

He shall not cry, nor lift up,  
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed shall he not break,  
And the dimly burning wick shall he not quench :  
He shall make the right to go forth according to the truth.

He shall not fail nor be crushed,  
Till he have set the right in the earth ;  
And the isles shall wait for his teaching. . .

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness,  
And have taken hold of thy hand,  
And kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people.  
For a light of the nations ;  
To open the blind eyes,  
To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
And them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

In the second Song (Isaiah 49 : 1-6, according to the Jewish translation) — when the servant speaks — it becomes clear that only the "righteous remnant" in Israel, only the loyal few, are meant to be the servants of the Lord. Accordingly, the first assignment will be to win over the whole people of Israel to true religion, then, the more difficult task of winning over the other nations of the world. Here is the latter part of the second Song (Isaiah 49 : 3-6) :

"And He said unto me :  
 'Thou art My servant, Israel,  
 In whom I will be glorified.  
 But I said : 'I have labored in vain,  
 I have spent my strength for naught, and vanity ;  
 Yet surely my right is with the Lord,  
 And my recompense with my God.'  
 And now saith the Lord  
 That formed me from the womb to be His servant,  
 To bring Jacob back to Him,  
 And that Israel be gathered unto Him —  
 For I am honorable in the eyes of the Lord,  
 And my God is become my strength —  
 Yea, He saith :  
 'It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be My servant  
 To raise up the tribes of Jacob,  
 And to restore the offspring of Israel ;  
 I will also give thee for a light of the nations,  
 That My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.' "

The third Song (Isaiah 50:4-9) tells how undeserved Israel's suffering will be, and therefore all the more painful, but productive of a character all the finer and all the purer, all the more equipped to do God's assigned work.

Ultimately, amongst nations of the world will dawn the recognition that God's servant, Israel, whom they despised, had really been suffering for their sake and for their sins, which deserved suffering they themselves had escaped. Then will they appreciate that Israel's life was one of self-sacrifice, a life so noble as to merit unbounded gratitude. That is the culminating theme of the fourth Song (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). Here is one stanza (Isaiah 53:4-6) in which the nations say :

"Yet surely it was he who bore our sickness,  
 And carried our pains :  
 Yet we did esteem him stricken,  
 Smitten of God, and afflicted !  
 But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
 He was crushed for our iniquities ;

The chastisement of our peace was upon him ;  
And with his stripes have we been healed !  
All we like sheep did go astray ;  
We turned everyone to his own way ;  
And the Lord made to light upon him the iniquity of us all !”

Assured that he was appointed for a divine purpose, in which anguish was to be an inevitable concomitant, the Jew could endure loss of home and Temple. Captivity was no longer a matter of disgrace. Rather did he look upon it as a badge of honor, a sign that he was engaged in his mission. Deutero-Isaiah's interpretation of God's way in the world yielded this revivifying stimulation not only to his contemporaries but to the entire future of Judaism — as we shall see.

In the immediate future, Deutero-Isaiah foresaw a restoration of the nation. Skilfully he read the signs of the times. A rising power was gaining strength ; it would soon overthrow Babylonia and, in pursuance of its policy, would allow the exiled Jews to return to Palestine. Deutero-Isaiah actually named the deliverer : Cyrus, king of the Persians, whom he calls the “Messiah,” the “anointed” king. Formerly, only Jewish kings were called Messiahs but, in Isaiah's comprehension, God rules the entire universe and therefore even through a non-Jewish king can He deliver Israel. For that matter, neither Bel nor the other gods of Babylonia had caused the defeat of Judah. The One God had launched the Babylonian hosts on their punitive errand and now the same One God will bring about the restoration, for He is the God of all peoples and of all history.

Of all the prophets, Deutero-Isaiah gives the most explicit and complete teaching of Monotheism. With rare sarcasm he ridicules the lifeless statues of the Babylonian processions as unworthy of the very concept of a deity. There are no foreign gods or strange gods. There is only One God : “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me” (Isaiah 45 : 5). The destruction of the Temple makes no difference to God's power or holiness ; He can be worshipped in any land. This momentous presentation characterizes Judaism at this early date in the history of religions, and

for all time, as a Universal Religion, recognizing a Universal God. In a subsidiary sense, the Judaism of Deutero-Isaiah is nationalist or particularist, inasmuch as it cautions Jews to retain their individuality, as special servants of the Universal Lord, until that time when the message will have reached the ends of the earth. Thus nationalism and universalism in Judaism are harmonized.

Next is the question, where is God found? God is immanent; His blessings are found within the heart of man—they are free to acquire, as free as the air we breathe, and have no relationship to material prosperity. At the same time, God is transcendent; His greatness is unsearchable.

#### 15. THE PERSIAN INFLUENCE PERMEATES

As Deutero-Isaiah had predicted, Cyrus in 537 B.C.E. conquered Babylonia. Forty to fifty thousand Jews migrated back to a small assigned territory in Palestine; the others remained in Babylonia, Egypt, and surrounding countries. The exile had made of them a changed people. Soberly they now took to heart the words of the prophets. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah could now pull their weight with the people and lift them to a spiritual plateau. Especially Deutero-Isaiah showed them how to brave disaster, to see in their sufferings a working-out of their mission. With great expectations they returned to Palestine. How they were disappointed when they arrived! The land had become impoverished; the Samaritans, a mongrel people of neighboring Samaria, proved troublesome; the Persian army, marching through the land, did no good.

These disillusioning realities the prophet Haggai attributes to the divine displeasure over the delay in rebuilding the Temple. His appeal meets with some results, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a prince of the Davidic dynasty, whom the Persians appointed Governor, assisted by Joshua, the high priest. Haggai sincerely believes that in a little while the gentile nations will be overthrown, Israel redeemed, the Temple established in greater glory than ever, and Zerub-

babel acknowledged as God's "anointed." His belief is reinforced by the fellow prophet, Zechariah (Chapters 1 to 8 in the Book of Zechariah). In eight fantastic visions, Zechariah delineates symbolically what he later iterates directly: his hope for the glorious restoration of the Temple and the people, of whom Zerubbabel (the "shoot" of David) will be the ideal ruler, the Messiah.

The hopes of both these prophets were doomed to disappointment. Still, they did much to buoy up patience and hope at a time when these virtues were at a premium.

At length, in 516 B.C.E., the Second Temple of Jerusalem was completed. There are no records of what took place during the ensuing sixty years. We do know that Zerubbabel, as ruler of Judea, failed to measure up to the figure of a Messiah. The governors of Judea who succeeded him were Persian non-Jews (with the one later exception of Nehemiah), the Jewish community being represented by the high priest. Heavy taxation exhausted the best of the people's produce, leaving the inferior for use in Temple sacrifices. The offer of the Samaritans to join in the rebuilding of the Temple had been repulsed—the pious builders had already learned their lesson, that if the religion is to live on in full strength it must keep a safe distance from any diluted expression of Judaism—and that refusal tended to make the Samaritans more of a nuisance than ever. So we see, conditions in Palestine were far from flourishing. It is to the Mesopotamian home of the exiles that we must now look for the further growth of Judaism.

During the Persian period of Jewish history which now opens we find necromancing, magic and idolatry becoming fashionable in certain Jewish circles. The influence of Persia, of course. For the two centuries of Persian control (until 333 B.C.E.) it would be natural to expect the infiltration of Persian modes of thought and conduct. The degree to which the Persian religion, called Zoroastrianism after its great teacher, affected Judaism is variously estimated. Some of the teachings of Zoroaster, who lived no later than the seventh century B.C.E., approach the ethical and monotheistic stand-

ards of Judaism and to that extent were probably welcomed by Jewry. But after Zoroaster's splendid personal example and influence dwindled, his followers reverted to the old Polytheism of nature. The religion assumed a definite dualistic form, with an eternal struggle between Ormazd, the deity of light and good, and Ahriman, the deity of dark and evil. Propinquity of residence brought the dualism into the camp of the Jew. Monotheism thus encountered its first major challenge, the challenge of one of the world's dominant religions.

Already in the writings of the prophet Zechariah we find the appearance of "the Satan." In this introductory stage, the Satan was thought of as a trusted angel, charged with the duty of cross-examining the sincerity of human claims to righteousness; hence he was somewhat of a prosecuting attorney in the Heavenly Court, and slightly more coöperative with the Heavenly Judge than is the prosecuting attorney with judges of flesh and blood. In the course of time, Satan's endless search for flaws in God's world demoralized his character and reputation, and imperceptibly he changed into a definite demon of destruction, opposed to God. A host of other demons were at his beck and call, ready to assist his nefarious designs. Confronted with such opposition, the side of good required the reenforcement of hosts of angels. And here was Zoroastrian dualism—the forces of evil arrayed against the forces of good—a dualism threatening the unity of the Jewish comprehension of God. The threat for some time was serious. Then Judaism shook it off, teaching: God's power surpasses all harm and suffering—God is the Lord of both light and darkness, of both good and evil—for good and evil, even as light and darkness, are each partial expressions of a whole. Light and darkness, good and evil: both are instruments of God, both serve God's plan.

The fantastic visions in the writings of some of the later prophets, including Zechariah, may be traced to a measure of Persian causation. The same is true of the literature which came to be known as apocalyptic and eschatological. Those passages which reveal the unknown mysteries of time are

“apocalyptic.” The dramatic account of what will happen in the “end of days” when upheaval will wreak havoc with the world and an appointed deliverer will lead the righteous to redemption and resurrection, is “eschatology.” Inasmuch as Zoroastrianism developed the first consistent eschatology it is likely that where such doctrine is found in Judaism it was acquired largely in Persia. Closely related is the doctrine of the hereafter, and its development in Judaism was necessarily accelerated by the contact with Zoroastrianism.

Let it be clearly understood, however, that these speculations received relatively scant attention in the writings of the Bible itself. The fuller consideration made its way into the extra-Biblical literature. For the continued development of the religion of the Bible let us return to Palestine during the years following the dedication of the Second Temple.

The blasted hopes of the returned exiles led to recurring doubts as to whether God was willing, or even able, to keep His promise. These misgivings were set at rest by a prophet whose name we have lost, but whose writings were tacked on to those of the other two Isaiahs, forming Chapters 56 to 66 of the Book of Isaiah, and whom therefore we must designate as Trito-Isaiah (the Third Isaiah).

To the righteous, Trito-Isaiah spoke soothing words of the healing God would soon bring. Even in their affliction they may enjoy peace of mind. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57 : 20). Ceremonial observance and fasting, divorced from exemplary behavior, he scoffed at as a mere shell of religion—hollow. That will not accomplish the desired glory of Israel. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, bringing home the wandering poor, shattering the yoke of tyranny—*that* will. All men and women who would observe these ethical demands, together with the Sabbath, ritual and Law, Trito-Isaiah welcomed within the ranks of Judaism. He rebuked any attempt to exclude from Judaism those not of Jewish birth, “the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord” (Isaiah 56 : 6), for he looked to the



time when all nations would come to the religion of the Jew, when God's house would be "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56: 7).

A kindred spirit to Trito-Isaiah we know by the name of Malachi. "Malachi" means "my messenger": the name was probably taken as a *nom-de-plume* by one who felt himself a messenger of God. Was he mistaken in naming himself a messenger of God, when the message he brings reads (Mal. 2: 10): "Have we not all one father? Hath not One God created us? Why then are we unfaithful to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

One especial evil of his day which Malachi denounced was the scandalous practice of divorcing Jewish wives to marry heathen women, and there is good reason to suppose that the choice centered amongst the newly-rich Samaritan women. The cruelty inflicted by such divorces he termed a crime against religion. Those acceptable to God must pass the test of decency, a test analogous to that which separates pure silver from dross.

This high standard which Malachi set up is unfortunately blemished by his final portrayal of the terrible Judgment Day, for which Elijah the prophet will be sent to prepare the world, when the wicked will be punished and the righteous rewarded. On this pattern later generations constructed most elaborate pictures of the Final Day. But how can this interpretation of suffering compare with that of Deutero-Isaiah, or yet another interpretation of which we shall soon read?

#### 16. ON INTERMARRIAGE

INTERESTINGLY enough, Jews who remained in exile in Babylonia were more painstaking in their devotion to Judaism than the Palestinian brethren. In their meeting places they chanted psalms and recited prayers as substitutes for the Temple animal sacrifices. In these informal assemblies we have the strengthening of the institution of worship which during the Greek period of Jewish history became known as the synagogue, the place of "assembly."

The traditions and writings of Judaism were being scrupulously collected and edited. The Law (Torah) was interpreted and explained by the "scribes," who in earlier times had been the copyists of the Law and now the best equipped to expound it. Foremost among the scribes ("Sopherim," in Hebrew), is the name of Ezra, one of priestly descent and of great learning. When news of the unhappy events and the religious neglect in Palestine came to him, Ezra sought the permission of the Persian king to lead an expedition to Judea (the Kingdom of Judah in Palestine), to carry out reforms. In addition to the royal decree of approval, he received from the king and his court gifts of silver and gold and an edict exempting Temple officials from taxation. And from his fellow Jews, many of whom had prospered in the land of their exile, he collected lavish contributions for the Temple. In the year 458 B.C.E., accompanied by some eighteen hundred families, some of the best in the land, Ezra set out, without military escort, on the four months' journey.

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra was accorded a hearty reception. As soon as the welcome calmed down he was made sadly aware of the alarming extent to which Jews had married non-Jews. He was distressed because he knew that if this intermarriage continued much further the small band of Jews remaining in Judea would soon be absorbed by the overwhelming heathen population and that would be the end of the Jewish religion: there can be no Jewish religion without Jewish people, for the religion grows with the people and is lived by them; all the greater is the danger when national integrity is broken up and a national religion — although universalistic in outlook and teaching — is all that remains of a former national independence. To the large crowd which had congregated about him Ezra gave tearful vent to his grief. At the suggestion of a spokesman that they all make a solemn vow to put away their foreign wives and their offspring and that Ezra take the matter in hand, excitement ran high, culminating in fervent oaths to dissolve the mixed marriages. Such a resolve sprang from the basic instinct of group-preservation; though extreme, it did not nearly match the

Athenian law which sold into slavery any alien man or woman who married an Athenian citizen, and the offspring enslaved also, besides imposing a heavy fine.

The oath of divorcement, impetuously made, proved a bitter pill when it came to summarily dismissing a loved wife or child. Five months later, at a second meeting, Ezra learned how little had been done. A reluctance to take hasty action expressed itself in a request for the appointment of a commission to consider individual cases on their own merit. While it is true that a number of Jews put off their foreign wives, it is equally true that others were outraged and vigorously opposed such an act.

The Book of Ruth was probably written at this time as a protest to the extremity of Ezra's advice. In the Book, Ruth, a Moabitess, marries a Jew, and although her husband dies and her mother-in-law releases her to do as she pleases, she insists on a life-long allegiance to the people of her adoption. Subsequently, Ruth is taken in marriage by Boaz, wealthy kinsman of her late husband, and the narration ends happily with the epilogue that the Lord found her worthy of becoming the ancestress of none less than King David. The moral, beautifully drawn, stresses that there is nothing to prevent a gentile from becoming a loyal Jew.

#### 17. THE WRITING OF THE TORAH

A DECISIVE step in the shaping of Judaism was taken by Ezra when he read to a large gathering in Jerusalem the Book of the Law of Moses, which he brought all the way from Babylon. Levites moved among the people, explaining and interpreting. The audience responded with loud weeping, grieved to learn how many of the laws they had never obeyed, some of which they had never even heard. It was necessary to calm them down and bid them prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles which they were now to celebrate. The Festival was concluded with prayer and a determined oath, sealed in writing, to obey the commands of the Book of the Law — whose principal injunctions were: the unswerving fidelity to

the Sabbath, the interdiction of mixed marriages, the observance of the Sabbatical year, the suspension of the collection of debts on the seventh year, the payment of Temple dues, the bringing of first-fruits and tithes, and the determination to live by the Law of Moses. This assembly under Ezra's leadership has come to be known as The Great Synagogue (Assembly). Tradition tells that other such assemblies convened on occasion, when the need arose, similarly to promulgate ordinances. One statement counts one hundred and twenty elders (including scribes) and eighty prophets among the Men of the Great Synagogue. This institution is said to have continued from Ezra's day right through the period of Persian control, into the third century before the Common or Christian Era.

If Ezra undertook the rôle of legislator, it was Nehemiah who filled that of executive. Nehemiah, cup-bearer to the king of Persia, requested and received appointment as Governor of Jerusalem and Judea. Immediately upon arrival he stirred to a hasty completion the restoration of the city walls. The two outstanding obstacles he removed with official efficiency: the burden of debt which weighed down the oppressed poor he lifted; the troublesome Samaritans with their corrupted half-Judaism he cut away from the body of Jewry, allowing them to drift off on their own to Mount Gerizim where they organized a rival ritual and temple. Most important of all, Nehemiah was in a position to impose strict enforcement of Ezra's reforms and thus to give them permanency.

The measures taken by Ezra and Nehemiah mark a turning point in the advance of Judaism in one more regard. Their public reading, interpretation and enforcement of the Book of the Law of Moses enshrined the Law as a Constitution, a foundation for the subsequent construction of the religious life. The Law was no longer the exclusive property of priests; it was implanted in the minds and hearts of the people. In the best minds and warmest hearts it grew and expanded, widespread implications being continually drawn out of the precious words. These meanings were passed

along by word of mouth and hence were called the Oral Law.

The more treasured teachings were set in writing on clay tablets or rolls of papyrus wood or prepared animal skins and these were included in the Written Law. In this context the word "Law" has a larger meaning than in current usage. "Law" is an approximate translation of the Hebrew word "Torah," whose original meaning was to "teach" or "point out," but in a fuller sense, as in the phrase Oral Law or Written Law, has come to connote "instruction" or "body of teachings."

In the modest days of old the book was the thing, not the author. We have already found that some of the greatest prophets are unknown to us by name. In the evolution of the Jewish religion, the name did not matter; it was teaching that counted. Because the first five Books of the Bible are called the Books of Moses there is the tradition that they were all (excepting the last eight verses which are posthumous) composed by Moses. But the Bible analysts of the last two centuries have ear-marked the stages in the growth of the Five Books (Pentateuch), and they have displayed evidence that the Five Books were composed and revised time and again by many unknown authors who attributed their work to Moses because of modesty or because they felt their writings were inspired by the spirit of Moses.

If we depart from orthodox tradition, and accept the evidence of the modern scholars, how shall we account for the authorship of these Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) — whose every word has been molded into the foundations of Judaism?

Earlier in this story of the Jewish religion, reference was made to the accumulated laws, legends and customs of the Ephraimite or Northern Kingdom (E), which were combined by the seventh century B.C.E. with those of the Judean Kingdom (J), to produce the welded product JE. Then in 621 B.C.E. came the odd incident connected with the newly-found Book of Deuteronomy, which stimulated not only the immediate reforms of the regnant king, Josiah, but also a re-editing of the whole history of the people, in line with the prophetic

teachings. This revision was completed in the sixth century, during the exile. But then, during the exile, there began in Babylonia a new trend of writings, stimulated by Ezekiel's vision of the restored kingdom and renewed worship which would be centered in the Temple. (When the Second Temple was erected in 516 B.C.E. some of these writings must have influenced the manner of worship introduced.) Then, after Ezekiel's day, further additions were made to the material out of which the Pentateuch was assuming form.

The main aim of the post-Ezekiel compositions is to reconstruct an ideal form of worship for the ideal Temple, and laws of holiness for a holy, God-governed nation. The keynote of these writings is expressed by the earliest of them, found in the Book of Leviticus, called the Laws of Holiness. Heretofore, ritual purity—the precise observance of ceremony—had been considered quite apart from moral purity—decent living. But the Law of Holiness combined the two types of purity under the slogan, "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19: 2). God demands both, physical or ceremonial holiness plus moral holiness.

This is a notable stride ahead in the upward march of religion: it means that even according to the ritual law the worshipper can no longer delude himself that he can successfully play the hypocrite simply because he adheres to the ritual demands of his religion; it means also that ritual observances, far from being isolated, are an expression and reinforcement of moral ideas. Ritual and morals constitute a unit in the worship of God, a unit which finds its noblest expression in the injunction of Chapter 19, verse 18, of Leviticus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." At this point, prophet and priest meet.

These post-Ezekiel writings which began with the exile and continued into the fifth century B.C.E. are termed the Priestly Code (symbolized as P), because of the predominant priestly tone. The P Code, which includes the above-mentioned Laws of Holiness, also expatiates on the Tabernacle of the wilderness, the consecration of Aaron as high priest, the stipulation that all Levites other than of the family of

Zadok (descendants of Aaron) could serve only as lesser priests, the details of the priestly vestments, the laws of priestly conduct, the varieties of sacrifices and libations. Emphasis is placed on the observance of the three Festivals of the year—Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles; the Rosh Hashanah Day of Memorial and the Day of Atonement are introduced; the Sabbatical Year for the land, the Year of Jubilee, the dietary laws, the ritual of cleansing from sin—all this, and more, is set out at great length in the Priestly Code, covering all of our present Book of Leviticus, most of Numbers and much of Exodus.

Even the amateur can spot the elements of the Pentateuch, so characteristic is the style. For example, it goes into the fullest of details with most meticulous precision, introducing elaborate genealogy, chronology and statistics—making the reading heavy and repetitious: “Throughout your generations,” “the self-same day,” “did according to”—here we have sample tell-tale phrases which are repeated dozens of times. One of the habits of the Priestly Code is to rephrase the inherited traditions and stories of Israel in such a manner as to trace religious observances to very early origins: the Sabbath is shown to begin with the creation of the world; the abstinence from blood, with Noah; circumcision, with Abraham; sacrifices, with Moses. It becomes clear that these narratives were written not as historic accounts but as an introduction to the Priestly laws, endowing them with the full weight of antiquity. So the Torah reached completion.

There is no absolute certainty in dating these stages in the formation of the Bible. New knowledge upsets old theories. But the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah does seem to bring to a climax the formation of the Pentateuch. By the end of the fifth century B.C.E. the earlier product (JED) was fused together with the Priestly composition—and the Five Books of Moses, as we know them, appeared. There were, one must add, further editions in formation continuing until 250 or possibly 200 B.C.E., but these editions were in reality merely slight additions.

## 18. PUTTING A MORAL INTO HISTORY

OF the Five Books of Moses, we have already considered, in some detail, the last four. The first Book, the Book of Genesis, has presented, in modern times, a scene of strife between religionists and anti-religionists, modernists and fundamentalists. Interpretations of Genesis are therefore many and varied. A position which avoids the extremes of orthodoxy or heterodoxy looks upon the Book of Genesis as a preface to the Books which follow. Genesis goes back to the natal and pre-natal influences in the life of the Jew. The Books must begin with some beginning and there is none better than the beginning of the world.

The stories of Creation, of the Flood, and so on, are parallels of legends to be found among other early writings. But the Biblical account of these is in a class all by itself. It reinterprets the primitive, and frequently crude, legends, giving them a profound signification: this marked difference becomes especially evident when a comparison is made with the corresponding legends of, say, the Babylonian people.

What wealth of instruction is stored in the simple story of Creation, as retold in the Bible!

There are really two stories of the Creation, one in each of the first two chapters of Genesis. The Chapter I story was written at about the time of Ezra—some three hundred years after the Chapter II story was composed. Coming at a time when ideas of God and religion were more advanced, the first chapter breathes a finer spirit than the second. Taking older legends into his hands, the author of Chapter I shapes them and molds their details in such a manner as to sculpt out the distinctive features of Judaism. He shows God as creating the world, not out of material objects worked into proper proportions with man-like hands, such as is seen in the earlier anthropomorphic pictures of creation, but by a divine will: "Let there be!" *Createo ex nihilo*. Moreover, every phase of creation is pronounced good—the fundamental belief of Judaism that this world is good, and life worth living. Man is created alike to God, endowed with the power



to think and manipulate and create, to labor as a co-worker with God. And then, even as God rests on the seventh day, so man should pause for a weekly Sabbath of rest, reflection and recreation. Here we have the nucleus of Jewish theology: one spiritual God, God of nature and man, transcendental and immanent, who demands righteous living—God as glimpsed by man in the workings of nature and in the life of man.

The Chapter I account of Creation gives tangible and easily understandable form to these profound truths. The tale is primarily an illustrative device; the theology is more important than the cosmology. What if the cosmology is out-of-date? What if the world was not created in six days? The theology is still true. Science gives its own, and probably truer, theory of the origin and process of the universe, but science still finds system and order and pattern and universal law in operation, and therefore humbly admits that there is nothing to disprove the awe-inspiring presence of the Prime Mover—which we call God.

Continuing in the Book of Genesis, we discover that the romances which attach to the lives of the Bible Patriarchs serve as object-lessons for the ethical and moral teachings of the prophets. Abraham becomes a prototype of adventure in religion which is characteristic in Biblical Judaism, of faith in God, of hospitality, of self-sacrifice. Models of morality that are too perfect fail to stimulate emulation: therefore, the Jacob type has great appeal, since Jacob, at first deceitful and unscrupulous, wrestles with his weakness and shakes it off—thereby giving courage to others who must struggle against shortcomings. Jacob's descriptive name, "Israel"—which connotes his life-long combat against hostile forces without and weaknesses within—what is that but a summation of the biography of the entire people of Israel and of those forces which would destroy the historic group and its religious purpose in the world? In the incidents connected with Joseph's career, we have a rebuke to those who favor one child above the other, and also to boastfulness; but more important are the virtues extolled—strength against

temptation, well-directed ambition, foresight, unswerving family devotion, and faith in God's providence. In short, we have in the Book of Genesis the developed communal conscience and religion of the Jew.

Subsequent to the completion of the Pentateuch, the historical Books of the Bible — Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings — were assuming their final form. In Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, the history of Israel was rewritten, apparently by the priestly group whose aim it was to put a moral into history. Also the writings of the Prophets were being collected and edited. The religious lyrics, known as Psalms, were growing in number. Proverbial statements and apothegms were being assembled as Wisdom Literature. All this final gathering-up of later writings, of unconnected threads and loose ends was the especial task of the scribes. Having begun after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the work of assembling the final material was completed about the end of the second century B.C.E., to form the Bible.

Let us now follow the factors which led to the completion of the Bible and the progressive making of Judaism.

The prophecy of Joel is of uncertain date but is thought to belong to this period shortly after Ezra. It gives evidence of the achieved tie-up of prophecy with the Temple ritual. Joel tells of a terrible locust plague, dreadful in its devastation, and one of its worst results he considers the lack of grain and wine for the Temple sacrifices. Joel takes this plague as a sign of the awful Day of the Lord, and bids men repent. He reaches the level of prophecy when he pleads: "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God" (Joel 2 : 13). A wind carries the locusts into the sea; prosperity returns; and Joel looks to the time when all mankind will be blessed with the spirit of God — "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions (Joel 2 : 28). But Joel displays a narrow nationalism in his prediction that on Judgment Day Israel's oppressors will be punished. A similar judgment on the nations is predicted by

Obadiah in the shortest book of the Bible, consisting of only one short chapter of twenty-one verses.

As though to protest against such narrow nationalism, we have the Book of Jonah. The author tells the tale of Jonah who seeks to escape from his God-given mission to go to Nineveh and save the non-Jewish population by preaching repentance. Jonah's cowardice induces God to show His displeasure by whipping up a terrific storm while Jonah is at sea; Jonah, blamed for the storm, is thrown into the sea; he is swallowed by a whale (invented for the purposes of the story), and deposited on the dry land. Jonah is compelled to do God's bidding. The fact that the people of Nineveh are not Jews makes no difference. God's love extends to Jew and non-Jew. He will show his compassion to all who repent of evil and do good.

#### 19. EACH POEM A PRAYER

THE voice of the anonymous prophets is heard not only in the words they spoke, in their didactic application of historic traditions, in the laws they proclaimed, in the narratives they recounted, but also in the Psalms they sang. Whilst most of the Psalms are attributed to David (excepting one each to Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman; several to Jeduthun, Asaph, Korahites), specific references in them make it clear that many were written hundreds of years after David, as much as eight hundred years after his day. A number of Psalms undoubtedly do date to David, but the others we might take as dedicated—not attributed—to David, the heroic kingly singer and musician. The ideals expressed in many of the later Psalms are patently those of the prophets.

The Service of the Temple included much more than the sacrificial offerings. The halls of the Temple resounded with the joyous music of the worshippers. In the First Temple, the words of devotion were sung to the simple tunes the people knew. In the Second Temple, the musical part of the Service came into greater prominence. The Levites were ar-

ranged in guilds to sing the Temple Psalms to the accompaniment of various wood and string and percussion instruments. This specialized arrangement gave incentive to gather all the Psalms and to preserve them, since they constituted the Hymnal of the Second Temple. From the time the Temple was restored (516 B.C.E) until about 150 B.C.E., these religious songs were collected, edited, and new compositions were added.

At first there seem to have been three groupings, or Books, of collected Psalms, but in their final form the hundred and fifty Psalms were divided into five Books. The individual Psalms vary in length from one of a hundred and seventy-six verses to one of only half a dozen verses.

Some of the Psalms are folk songs, spontaneous outpourings of the heart; others are artificial arrangements, employing devices for effect, such as beginning each verse or each half verse with succeeding letters of the alphabet. The subject matter covers a multitude of themes: personal, communal, national, ritual, natural, cosmic.

The Psalms must be visualized in their original settings. How impressive the singing of the Levites must have been in their processional to the Temple (Psalm 24: 7-10). Alternating with solo and choral singing, they reach the closed gates. The call rings out:

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of Glory shall come in.”

The voices within the gates question: “Who is the King of Glory?” A powerful reply shakes the very gates:

“The Lord strong and mighty,  
The Lord mighty in battle.”

Then the whole populace responds:

“The Lord of Hosts,  
He is the King of Glory!”

At this challenge the gates open to receive the singers and worshippers.

When each of the three Festivals of the year drew near, the ardent ones of the outlying hamlets of Judea banded together for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Cheered by their festive journey they sang away the miles, touching on themes of the moment. As they approached their destination, the prospect of renewing friendships awakened a song (Psalm 131:1): "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is that brethren should dwell together!" And in the Service of the Festival the special Hallel Psalms were sung, designated "Hallel" because they begin or finish with the word "Hallelujah," a cue to praise the Lord.

Of enthralling beauty are those Psalms which describe the grandeur and variety of nature, the created gifts of God. In Psalm 104 (verses 1-3) we have a masterpiece:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
O Lord my God, Thou art very great;  
Thou art clothed with honor and majesty:  
Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment;  
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:  
Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters;  
Who maketh the clouds His chariot;  
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind; . . ."

From acclaiming the foundations of the earth, the poet proceeds to the springs of the valleys which give drink to the thirsty, to the grass that grows for the cattle, to the wine which gladdens the heart of man, to the bread which strengthens him. He points to the birds singing among the branches, the lions seeking their food, man going to his labor. Out of God's open hand all living things seek sustenance; by the breath of His spirit do they live. Enraptured, the poet pours forth his gratitude:

"I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.  
My meditation of Him shall be sweet;  
I will be glad in the Lord" (Psalm 104: 33, 34).

Also of the past glories of the nation from the days of the Patriarchs, and of the Lord's goodness to Israel, did the Psalm-

ists sing. Of national misfortunes, too, they sang, of distress in exile, of the pain of later persecutions: then their songs turned to the ideal day of the future when an ideal king will reign over a happy people.

The lessons of personal experience likewise find a place in the Psalms. Experience taught Psalmists that the wicked inevitably suffer for their sins while the righteous are rewarded. One Psalm tells of the great reward to be found in observing the Law: "The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19: 7). The belief in the resurrection of the dead is all but neglected by the Psalmists. But great stress is placed on finding God and keeping close to Him, on sharing the mystic's experience of communion with God. Though God is mighty in works of nature, He is yet near to the heart of man. This attachment to God we find pictured in phrases of undying beauty in the well-known twenty-third Psalm. We have it also in these verses (6, 7, 10) of the fifty-first Psalm: "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom"; "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"; "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

So rich and vivid are the Psalms that it is difficult to call a halt. The Psalms are indeed the heart of the Jew. Through them he expresses all his emotions, hope and disappointment, joy and sorrow. They are the truest index of the religious life of ancient Jewry, for they are not simply arguments about God nor exhortations to worship him: they are the soul speaking to God, prayers, prayers in poetry.

For us of this modern day some of the Psalms are difficult to appreciate because of unknown specific events to which they occasionally refer, or because of the thoughts they intimate but do not develop, or because of their limited knowledge of the scientific facts they mirror. What is really amazing is the extent to which these Psalms, the majority of them, are still in valued use today — more than two thousand years after the last one of them was written. That is their strength: the Psalms are timeless.

One section of Biblical poetry, the Song of Songs, whose date is uncertain, probably reached its final form in the general gathering-up of the Persian period. What is not uncertain is the beauty of the poetry. Originally, it may have been a Palestinian wedding song, or a love lyric—possibly immortalizing in verse the love between Solomon and the comely Shulamite. Whatever the origin, the fine poetry was accepted as a Book of the Bible because it was taken to express the warm devotion of Israel to God, and of God to Israel.

#### 20. WISDOM LITERATURE, AND RELIGION'S DEEPEST PROBLEM

ANOTHER form of literature which was assuming completed form during the fourth century B.C.E. is identified as Wisdom Literature. The Hebrew word is "Mashal": in its highest form, it is philosophy; in its earliest form, it is no more than a stringing together of parables, riddles, fables. A heterogeneous range of these bits of wisdom is collected in the Book of Proverbs. It is likely that a portion of the Book contains the famed parables of King Solomon: that might account for tradition's assigning the Book of Proverbs, as a unit, to the authorship of that all-wise king. Another collection is said to have been made in the seventh century B.C.E. under King Hezekiah.

In the simple communal life of the Hebrews, if a person found himself in a muddle, it was the natural thing for him to go to an older person, one with experience, for advice. If the advice was sound, which was not always the case, he who gave it earned a reputation as a "hakam," a sage. Especially wise was he if in uttering counsel he could turn it into a clever phrase, simple but telling, not lacking in wit or banter. Thus he became a proverb-maker. Slogans in those days were no less popular than they are now. Hence slogans for guidance in conduct, with their kernel of truth, were immediately grasped and passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. The ease with which they could be picked up in foreign territory, and remembered, makes it difficult to

ascertain the land of origin of most proverbs: we therefore find similarities between many of the Hebrew wise sayings and those of Egypt, Babylonia and Greece.

The Book of Proverbs, though, is distinctive and differs from the proverbs of other peoples in that, despite much that is utilitarian or prudent, there is a definite religious appeal hovering over the otherwise practical dicta. Wisdom is recognized as a gift of God; the foolish and the irreligious are frequently linked together. The Book of Proverbs receives its Jewish stamp from advice of this sort:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;  
And lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct thy paths.  
Be not wise in thine own eyes:  
Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth;  
By understanding hath He established the  
heavens” (Proverbs 3: 5-7, 19).

The “*Mashal*” of the Bible reaches its highest form — as philosophy — in the Book of Job, a poetic drama, with a prose prologue and epilogue. The anonymous author of the Book of Job, who, we judge, lived in the fifth century B.C.E., probes with consummate skill the deepest problem of religion. So trenchant is the analysis, so daring are the ideas, and so emotional are the climaxes, that Jewish tradition has assigned the authorship to Moses, believing no one else capable of such a masterpiece.

The old and familiar materials of the prologue open the drama. In the court of heavenly beings, Satan refuses to believe in anyone serving God without some ulterior motive, but God is convinced of the existence of disinterested virtue. An experiment is to decide. Job, a faultless, God-fearing man, is the victim of the experiment. God empowers Satan to strip Job of his wealth, of his sons and his daughters — yet Job imputes no blame to God, but even in his grief utters words



of worship: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1 : 21). Not satisfied, Satan insists on inflicting physical injury: "Touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" (Job 2 : 5). When Job is accordingly smitten with elephantiasis, the most dreaded disease of antiquity, his wife immediately upbraids him: "Wilt thou still cling to thy piety? Curse God, and die!" (Job 2 : 9). But Job rebukes her: "Thou speakest as an impious woman might speak. Should we accept the good at God's hand, and not also the evil?" (Job 2 : 10).\*

Job's torture grows. The three friends who had come to condole with him have only cold comfort to give. They prattle platitudes, the conventional ideas that if a man suffers it is sure proof that he has sinned, that even to question the justice of his punishment is sinful, and that his only hope lies in repentance. To support their statements, old and wise Eliphaz cites his own experience; shallow Bildad quotes wise saws of the past; blunt Zophar roundly accuses Job of having sinned, even if he himself is unaware of having done so. With contempt, Job designates these "time-honored notions" as "rubbish." ("Liars for God," Coleridge called the comforters.) All that his friends have to say, Job already knows. He knows also that he has not sinned. He is bewildered. Despite his friends' suspicions and accusations, Job repeatedly insists on his innocence. That knowledge of his own integrity emboldens him to challenge God. If God be just, His inexplicable ruthlessness—"the innocent and the wicked alike doth He annihilate" (Job 9 : 22) — requires an explanation.

To Job comes the enlightening realization that it is not irreligious to struggle with his doubts. His absolute refusal to blame himself, his daring to disbelieve the accepted explanations, his courage to question God Himself—these are possible only because his conscience is clear. Strengthened by the unshakable conviction that he is guiltless, as guiltless as is humanly possible, he can stand up to man, to God and

\* Where the quoted Job verses differ from the standard Bible translation, they follow the corrected translation of M. Buttenwieser ("The Book of Job").

to his fate without fear. Although afflicted physically, Job can find strength and peace within himself. God is terrifying for the wicked, but Job, at one with God, is unmoved: "I will account to him for every one of my steps; like a prince will I approach him" (Job 31: 37). Whatever fate may bring to him from the world without, within his own heart and mind the righteous one finds the reward of his right-doing. That is the first conclusion that the drama of Job reaches.

But what of the larger problem of physical misfortune? From bitterly lamenting his fate, Job proceeds to plead with God: "Doth it become Thee to crush me, and to despise the work of Thy hands?" (Job 10: 3). Infinitely more powerful than man is God: His power and concern are not only over man but also over the stars and sun and earth and sea and all living things. There lies the answer! "Lo, these wonders are but the outer edges of His ways; only a small whisper of Him do we catch. Who can perceive the thunder of His omnipotence?" (Job 26: 14). God's powers are unrestrained and His ways are "past knowledge."

The finite wisdom of man cannot penetrate the purpose of the Infinite; if the human intellect were not limited, but could judge in terms of the Infinite, it would find that what seems unjust in the laws of life is—from the broader standpoint—just. This we know—God has fixed laws for the forces of nature, which nature dare not violate. Likewise are inviolable laws fixed for man, and for him the supreme law is: "The fear of God, that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding" (Job 28: 28). The conclusion of the drama, Job's unshakable faith, vindicates not only Job but also God's faith, as it were, in man.

With a problem so searching, it was inevitable that those whose spiritual depth was less than that of the author of the Book of Job should misunderstand it. Therefore it is not surprising that through scholarly analysis we find superfluous additions in the Book, of a later date, which modify the original solution to the problem. The interpretations of Job are many. One is: that he believed in an after-life where

righteousness would be rewarded; but this explanation is not borne out by the text. Another is: that there is something deeper than reason and logic, a faith in the guidance of a power greater than man, which enables man to live on happily even though the riddle of the universe be hidden from him. Still another is: that the Book is great because it ends with a question mark, that it does not glibly find an answer to an unanswerable problem. Whatever the interpretation, all agree that the book of Job is one of the most profound approaches to the problem of evil and suffering in a God-governed world, as well as one of the greatest documents of the Bible and, indeed, of all human creation.

## 21. JUDAISM VERSUS HELLENISM

THE developing tendencies in Judaism were being crystallized during a period of which our historic records are few and meagre. Perhaps in those years, no news was good news. From all we know, so long as the Jews paid their tribute they enjoyed comparative peace during most of the two centuries of Persian control.

Then Persia tottered before the irresistible invasion of Alexander the Great. In 333 B.C.E., Judea, a small parcel in the conquest, was handed over to the Macedonian Empire.

There is a legend that during the campaign, when Alexander reached the outer walls of Jerusalem to demand submission, the high priest headed a procession to meet the conqueror. In extending greetings, the high priest interpreted a vision as a prediction of victory for Alexander over the Persians. Alexander was so impressed that, having come to destroy Jerusalem, he remained to worship. In a practical way, too, he expressed his pleasure by exempting the Judeans from paying taxes during the Sabbatical Year. Behind the legend is the truth that the Jewish people were well treated by Alexander the Great. As far as external conditions were concerned, the change from Persian to Greek control involved only a change in the recipient of the tribute. But not so the religious life.

In conquering countries it was Alexander's purpose to win them for Greek civilization. At various centers he erected arenas to stage Greek athletic spectacles, theatres to produce Greek drama, libraries to hold Greek literature and art, temples to harbor Greek gods. The finest of these he built in Alexandria, the city near the mouth of the Nile, which was dedicated to him. Hellas is the name for Greece; Hellenes is the name for the Greeks; hence, the Greek influence which swept over Egypt and Syria is known as Hellenism. Prior to the Macedonian conquest, Jews had lived in contact with Greeks, and had rigidly maintained their isolation. But now Hellenism became a serious rival of Judaism.

Alexander proved a brilliant meteor that soon burned out. In 323 B.C.E., at the age of 34, he died, and his empire was divided among his three generals. One gained possession of the European area; another, Ptolemy, ruled over Egypt; the third, Seleucus, acquired Syria and the Persian land. What about Judea? It lies between Egypt and Syria . . . a good enough cause for a war of some twenty years' duration. The immediate victory went to Egypt. From 301 to 198 B.C.E., Egypt was the recognized, but not undisputed, master over Palestine.

Both Egypt and Syria made bids for the good-will of Judea. The Ptolemies invited the Jews to come and settle in Alexandria, Egypt, there to enjoy rights equal to those of the Greeks. Large numbers availed themselves of the opportunity and in an amazingly short time Alexandria became a great Jewish center, second in importance only to Jerusalem.

The Seleucids of Syria extended a competitive invitation for the Jews to inhabit Antioch, which had the advantage of proximity to Judea. In the tug of war between Egypt and Syria, when Antiochus the Great of Syria wrested Judea from Egypt, in 198 B.C.E., he extended full religious freedom to the Jews, exempting the Temple and priests from taxation, making it an offence for non-Jews to enter the Temple, and he issued a prohibition against anyone bringing ritually unclean animals to Jerusalem. These laws were welcome, unquestionably, but Hellenism lurked in the background. Through this

double-barrelled kindness, Judaism was being exposed to danger. As we shall soon discover, Judaism was almost killed with kindness.

Hellenism was too temptingly attractive. It was all for the development of the physique; it placed a premium on etiquette, finesse, beauty; it was enamored of the arts; it encouraged philosophy: nothing seriously wrong or sinful. But Hellenism was more than this; it carried a sting. Equally important and inseparable was the accompanying Greek religion: the immoral Dionysus (deity of life) worship, analogous to the Baal obscenities; the crude Demeter (deity of fertility) worship, just another version of the Babylonian Ishtar; hosts of other deities; secret cults with esoteric doctrines and depraved practices. Unfortunately, by the time Greek culture came in close enough contact with Judaism to be of influence, it had lost the glory of the earlier philosophers; it now encouraged loose and careless living; it lacked the moral discipline of Judaism. To fall into this trap would be, for Jews, a drop far below the level to which the prophets and poets and law-givers had succeeded in raising them. The religious achievement of centuries would be undone.

Here is one way of appraising the danger: Hellenism was the product — partly good and partly bad — of city-life; Judaism had proven its strength for nomadic shepherds and it had avoided the pitfalls of agricultural communities; could it now prevail against the distractions of city-life, could it establish the validity of a practical, yet uplifting, religion for the city-dweller? The lure was attractive; but happily, the resistance which had been built up proved equal to the temptation.

In retrospect, we know which side won out. But at the time, the result was far from predictable. For a long stretch, Hellenism was gaining ground. With unhealthy avidity many Jews adopted Greek names, games, sectarian philosophical vagaries.

In Alexandria the Hebrew language was forgotten so quickly that a Greek translation of the Torah became necessary. Under the encouragement of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.E.) the Books of Moses were translated, and at

later dates the rest of the Bible was put into Greek. A romantic tale would have us believe that when the librarian of Alexandria expressed his desire for a copy of the Jewish Bible, Ptolemy Philadelphus invited seventy-two sages, six of each tribe, to be his guests and to make the translation into Greek. Separately and in seclusion the scholars labored for seventy-two days; when their work was finished, the seventy-two copies were compared and found to be alike in every regard. Hence, the Greek translation came to be known as the Bible of the Seventy, or the Septuagint, symbolized as LXX. The real origin of the name may derive from the authorization or approval it received from the seventy elders.

The Septuagint is the very first translation of the Bible. It is indispensable to modern scholarship because, the original Hebrew copy having been lost, the Septuagint gives the best indication of what the original must have been, although inaccuracies in translation and an unfortunate tampering with the text must be discounted. In the period of its creation the Septuagint was important because this Greek version was read at the synagogue Service, rather than the Hebrew original which the masses could not understand. Moreover, it served as a basis for Hellenistic Judaism.

In Judea the Temple retained its prominence. Provincial folk of Judea still looked forward to their pilgrimages to the Jerusalem sanctuary for the three yearly Festivals. On the Day of Memorial and the Day of Atonement, the priestly pomp and ceremony were thrilling to behold. If anything, the Temple gained in official importance, since the high priest now served not only as religious leader but also as civic representative of the Judean Jews and as the one person whom the Ptolemies recognized as the responsible head.

Despite the official supremacy of the Temple, it was the synagogue that afforded intimate religious expression for the masses. Not permitted to erect a sanctuary which might rival the Jerusalem Temple, it became imperative for Jews in distant communities to establish local centers of worship, synagogues — miniature or lesser sanctuaries — like those in Babylon.

The grandeur to which some of the early synagogues rose may be judged by a description of the grandest of them all, the Alexandrian synagogue. It is said to have contained seventy-one golden seats for the elders, the main floor and double gallery for the assemblage. Those who belonged to a particular trade occupied seats reserved for that trade, so that a stranger seeking employment or companionship would take his place amongst those of his occupation and thus become acquainted. There was a wooden platform in the center of the synagogue, on which a flag was waved as a signal to the congregation when it was time to respond "Amen"—so large, presumably, was the auditorium.

Notwithstanding the impressiveness of Temple ritual and the elegance of synagogue architecture, Hellenism was steadily making inroads, as is plain to see in one of the latest Books of the Bible, written at the end of the third century B.C.E. Koheleth is the Hebrew name of the Book; the word seems to mean "one who addresses a gathering," hence a teacher or lecturer, and thus, through Greek, the Book acquires the name Ecclesiastes, "The Preacher." Ecclesiastes comes under the category of Wisdom Literature, because of its philosophic tendency. But the philosophy shows a decided Hellenistic bent. Complaint of boredom with a monotonous and meaningless world is un-Jewish.

The Book opens with a calm though hopeless pessimism (Eccl. 1: 2, 3, 9): "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." Seeking to find meaning in the seeming emptiness of life, the Preacher turns to wisdom, only to learn that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccl. 1: 18). Then he inquires of the other extreme, of utter folly in the mad search for pleasure, but this vain straining ends in nothing better than "vexation of spirit." Of the two, wisdom is preferable: "the wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness" (Eccl. 2: 14). But what's the good? They both end the

same way. Both are forgotten in time. The painstaking achievement of the wise man may be dissipated by a foolish son. Men and beasts alike die: all go to one place, to the dust whence they came. When Ecclesiastes thinks of the poverty and oppression of life, he deems death better than birth. The miserly hoarding of wealth does not guarantee happiness—"the sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Eccl. 5: 12). "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9: 11). The irony of fate! What sense is there in living the righteous life? To strengthen the argument, the author of the Book puts these despairing words in the mouth of Solomon, the wise and wealthy king, who had lived life to the full and therefore spoke with the authority of experience.

Here is skeptical, fatalistic Hellenism grappling with Judaism. It sees no progress, no justice, no hope, and therefore no meaning in life but to eat, drink, and enjoy whatever pleasures chance may bring. Although Ecclesiastes presents this outlook very clearly, almost convincingly—so convincingly, in fact, that many Bible scholars believe the solution not his own, but that of some interpolator—he ultimately finds himself on some solid ground in Judaism. His trust in God is unshakable: an all-powerful God created the world, and, whereas to us He appears indifferent, His must be a purpose deeper than that which man can discern. "That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" (Eccl. 7: 24). Yes, "man should eat and drink, and should make his soul enjoy the good of all his labor . . . it was from the hand of God" (Eccl. 2: 24). Whatever be the end of life, the opportunity to enjoy one's days comes from God; man should take advantage of it. One all-encompassing economy rules the earth: "the profit of the earth is for all" (Eccl. 5: 9). "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other" (Eccl. 7: 14). Human experience teaches



us how best to conduct our lives, it teaches prudence, moderation, calm, reverence. There is a time for every purpose and every work—such work as comes to hand we should not only do but enjoy.

The Book ends with the conclusion of the whole matter, "Fear God, and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12: 13, 14). This conclusion, we have observed, is by certain scholars adjudged a later addition, seeing that it is contrary to the challenging spirit of Ecclesiastes—but without the reverent conclusion, it is fairly certain that Ecclesiastes would have been excluded from the Bible; even as it is, its undisputed acceptance did not come until the Book was about three hundred years old: therefore the Book of Ecclesiastes must be considered in its entirety, and in the light of the epilogue—whether original or interpolated—must be regarded as the battle-ground for the tussle between the philosophy of Hellenism and the way of Judaism.

## 22. THE SCRIBES CHAMPION JUDAISM

WHAT was first a tussle soon grew into a life and death combat. A sturdy barrier against the encroachment of Hellenism was built up by the beginning of the second century B.C.E., by Joshua ben Sira. His book of essays, which was subsequently given the inaccurate and cacophonous name *Ecclesiasticus*, is not only a bulwark against Hellenism but also an encyclopedia of information regarding the shaping of Judaism during this formative period. And yet, his book was not voted worthy of inclusion in the Bible. It apparently lacked antiquity: it did not attribute authorship to a hero of the past—to Solomon, for instance, as in the case of Ecclesiastes. Ben Sira was too well known to his contemporaries who with him were engaged in the selecting and editing process of bringing the Bible to its final form. Familiarity may or may not breed contempt but it certainly can disenchant. To justify the exclusion of the Book of Ben Sira,

the authorities exposed supposed shortcomings — for instance, that it placed too much stress on Aaron and yet not enough on the Messiah and the future life. Exclusion meant neglect, and during the Middle Ages the Hebrew version of the book was actually lost, so that our knowledge of it comes through the Church which preserved the Greek translation made in Alexandria by Ben Sira's grandson.

The Book of Ben Sira is listed as Wisdom Literature. It teaches through pithy epigrams, such as Ben Sira might have clipped off for his disciples in Jerusalem. Not abstract philosophy does it teach, but practical rules of conduct. Let it not be thought, however, that wisdom is simply the prudent choice between good and evil. Rather is it something divine. It emanates from God: through it God fashioned creation. Wisdom is an attribute of God at the same time that it is the highest glory of man. What man knows is a reflection from the greater wisdom of the divine. Ben Sira is not opposed to philosophy but to the metaphysical meanderings of the Greeks. It is his purpose to show that such esoteric knowledge is beyond man; the revelation from God, the Torah alone, is the wisdom allotted to man — in that, Jewish Wisdom is superior to Hellenic. It is superior because it is specific revelation.

Here is the chain of reasoning: God is all, and more than all; He is both immanent and transcendent, expressing Himself through nature, but is greater than nature; His special relationship to Israel is in the gift of the Torah, through Moses: through fulfilling the Law of the Torah — the specific revelation — man comes to experience the blessings of life. The discipline of the Torah places a restraint upon his evil inclinations; it strengthens him; it increases the scope of his life. Evil is largely the creation of man, arising from his imperfections, passion and greed, and requires correction through obedience to the Torah. Free-will is given to man and this makes him responsible for his conduct but also gives him the chance genuinely to repent of his sins through the merit of good deeds and then God in His mercy will forgive him. Health is a blessing, a reward, which is achieved through prayer, and God's aid reposes in the skill of the

physician. Ben Sira's attitude toward death is brave: he rejects resurrection, Hell or Sheol, since punishment and reward are to be found in this life; be prepared, he teaches, firmly to face the future.

It is in this world that Ben Sira looks for the reward of correct conduct. The wicked seem to get away with their designs, yes, and enjoy their ill-gotten advantage: be not envious; be patient; what happens at the end? When he appears invincible, what happens? "A suspicion of disease defieeth the physician—king today, and tomorrow dead!" (10:10). For every man that practices righteousness there is a reward. And even after death, the good man leaves a good name, an unblemished reputation which redounds to the glory of children. There is solid sense in the way Ben Sira, avoiding the dangers of far-flung fantasies, brings religion to a practical level, the level of daily life, in every detail, to the finest points of etiquette. The family is for him very important—"get thee a wife, the choicest possession" (36:24)—but there is nothing as bad as a bad wife, for then, "the husband sits among his friends and without motive he sighs" (25:18). Loud laughter he cannot abide; a faint smile should be the limit. Ben Sira sees no reason for refusing to enjoy food or music: it is a delight to have both together, but what torture to have to listen to table chatter, when music is playing. Table manners forbid one, the moment seated, from eyeing the table, and from commenting, "How much meat there is on the table" (31:12). Stretching for food or gulping it down are likewise vulgar. For Ben Sira, the righteous man is sociable while sedate; charitable while discriminating, and of healthy conscience.

Ben Sira gives us a most complete picture of the new type of leadership in Judaism. Whilst the Temple activities were in the hands of the priests, the synagogue, the more democratic institution, developed under the leadership of the scribes, some of them priests as well. The book reveals to what extent the scribes, adhering to the example of Ezra, were organized in selecting, absorbing and imparting the teachings of the Bible, now all but completed. Ben Sira himself was

a Sofer, a profound student and interpreter of the Law. With personal knowledge he presents the brief for the scribe, the man who concentrates his thought on the Law of God: "He will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and occupy himself with the study of prophecies, and pay attention to expositions of famous men, and will penetrate into the elusive turns of parables. . . He will make public the instruction he has to impart and his pride will be in the Law of the covenant of the Lord" (39: 1-3, 8).

It is important to remember that, at this early date, schools for the detailed study of Judaism were already established institutions. His own school Ben Sira called a Yeshibah and a Bet ha-Medrash, names which have ever since denoted higher schools of Jewish learning. Law was the subject of study, Law in the broadest sense—ritual, moral, juridical and business law. Law—scrupulous to the utmost detail, as, for example, in the requirement that a tradesman dust his scales and balances and wipe off his measures and weights regularly, to ensure honesty.

With the deterioration of the priesthood, the scribes mounted in prestige and leadership until, by the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, in the year 70 C.E. (Common or Christian Era), they became, under the new title of Tannaim, triumphant interpreters of Judaism.

### 23. THE ISSUE DRAWN: HASIDIM AND MACCABEES BATTLE HELLENISM

THE deterioration of the priesthood set in very soon after Ben Sira's day. Syrian Seleucids now had their innings in possessing Judea. The Syrian form of Hellenism had none of the redeeming qualities which were to be found in Alexandria. It was a vicious distortion, which made Hellenism synonymous with an unbridled life. It was this that ate into the morale of the priesthood, since the priests—the aristocrats—strove to qualify as one-hundred-percent Hellenists. A day of reckoning had to come. It did, in the following succession of events.

In Jerusalem, Simon, a priest with Hellenist aspirations, opposed the pious, anti-Hellenist Onias III whom the people had elected high priest. The Syrian Emperor, Seleucus IV, because of a battle his father had lost, was obliged to pay the Romans a heavy indemnity. Seizing the opportunity of currying favor with the impoverished emperor, and ignoring the discipline of Judaism, Simon lost no time in acquainting the Syrians with the treasures of the Temple, and even suggested that the high priest was wilfully concealing them. Thereupon a Syrian emissary was sent to seize the roost, but failed — because of a miracle, says a tradition. Nevertheless, Simon had branded Onias III a traitor; therefore pious Onias set out to interview Seleucus IV, but the latter was assassinated before his arrival. Antiochus Epiphanes now (175 B.C.E.) became emperor, and it was in his eyes that Onias had to vindicate himself. But to complicate matters, Onias' brother, Jason, a Hellenist leader, also came to the capital at Antioch, hoping to depose his brother. As bait Jason offered a large bribe and a program to hellenize Jewry, in exchange for the office of high priest. Antiochus gladly accepted. He cleared Onias out of the way and Jason he appointed high priest — the first high priest not chosen by the Jews themselves.

With zeal Jason busied himself hellenizing Jerusalem. He established a gymnasium adjacent to the Temple, to which the priests hurried after performing their Temple duties with indecent haste. Jason went so far as to send a good-will sacrifice to the heathen altar at Tyre. Hellenism now having become identified with opportunism, there was no reason why the Hellenist priest Menelaus, a brother of the earlier aspirant Simon, should not offer Antiochus a larger sum for the office of high priest. That he had to rob the Temple treasures to raise the sum, and to murder Onias for daring to object, did not matter. Jason was deposed and Menelaus, the higher bidder, became high priest. Now it was Jason's move. Disgruntled, he seized his opportunity when Emperor Antiochus was reported killed in battle, and with the aid of an army expelled Menelaus. But Antiochus was not dead; quite alive, with the breath of war in his nostrils, he bore down

upon Jerusalem to punish Jason, to plunder the Temple, to shed blood. In 168 B.C.E., smarting under a humiliation in Egypt, Antiochus, homeward bound, trampled upon Jerusalem, venting his fury. Determined to crush Judaism, he ordered that the literature of Judaism be confiscated, that a penalty of death be imposed on any one adhering to Jewish observances, that Jews be forced to sacrifice to the Greek deities, that the very Temple be given over to the worship of Zeus, to sacrifices of swine and the carousal of harlots. Little wonder that a Roman historian nicknamed this emperor, Antiochus "Epimanes" (the "crazy one") instead of "Theos Epiphanes" (the "god made manifest"), the rather ambitious title Antiochus had applied to himself. With the masses of Judea he had indeed reached the limit!

Antiochus miscalculated the strength of the Jews. True, they had no army to speak of, but they had built up what is more powerful than an army: a determination that the religion must survive, defended, if need be, by their very lives. The flirtation of the upper classes with Hellenism had stimulated a counter movement of greater piety and more ardent devotion to Judaism. The labors of Ezra and Ben Sira and of the other scribes and teachers had taken root. A group called Hasidim, the Pious, could now be distinguished. Their life was wrapped up in the Torah and in devotion to that which they held to be pure Judaism. The Hasidim were not a sect nor a political party but a body of the faithful, who delighted to observe the Law in every strict detail—for example, in some instances they were willing to die rather than violate the prohibition against eating swine-flesh. In the earlier stages of the Syrian oppression the Hasidim resorted to passive resistance; many fled to the wilderness; others perished as martyrs.

The loss of national independence, now a matter of hundreds of years, was saddening to the Pious, but endurable; but a direct move to strangle the religion was for them catastrophic—beyond endurance. Antiochus did not realize with what he was tampering.

When in the small town Modin, the aged priest Mattathias

tore down a newly erected Greek altar and shouted defiance (I Mac. 2 : 27) — “Whosoever is zealous of the law and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me!” — that outcry resounded over the hills of Judea and rallied the Pious to the defense of the Torah. In retaliation, the punitive Syrian army staged one of its first attacks on the Sabbath, and the Pious, not to desecrate the Sabbath, would not lift a finger in defense. That compelled Mattathias to enact a special regulation allowing battle on the Sabbath in defense of life.

When, after a few months, Mattathias died, his stalwart son Judah inherited the leadership. A great warrior he was, perhaps the greatest of Jewish history, fighting as he did, and defeating trained and fully-equipped Syrian armies six times the size of his own. He was given the name “Maccabee,” which means a “hammer” — others explain the word as the Hebrew abbreviation of his defense slogan: “Who is like unto Thee among the gods, O Lord!” — and the name Maccabean has become affixed to the entire episode.

After three years’ valiant fighting, Judah gained the Temple hill, and although unable to drive the Syrians out of their Jerusalem garrison, he directed his attention to cleansing the defiled Temple, clearing out every last trace of the Greek idolatry, building a new altar to God. On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, 165 B.C.E., the Temple was reconsecrated, and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) was joyously celebrated for eight days, a Feast which has become an annual institution in Judaism. This occasion well deserved immortalization, not so much because of the military victory — the victory, in fact, was by no means complete — but because the crisis tested the strength of the Jewish religion and found it strong. Persecution of the people was not the novel feature of the crisis. Without precedent was the persecution of the religion, the direct campaign to annihilate the religion of the Jew — and it failed. The success of the Maccabees constituted a victory not only for Judaism, but in a larger sense a victory for democracy, for freedom of conscience and religious preference, for honest and qualified leadership, against the evils of dictatorship.

The teachers of the Law finally made Judaism water-tight. Second-rate Hellenism, whether gently lapping at the barriers of Judaism or crashing at them with thunderous waves, could not water down the pure strength of Judaism. Whatever had penetrated they forced out.

What helped make Judaism water-tight were the traditions which circulated among the Pious. Heroic tales were relayed of one, Daniel, who lived some four hundred years previously, in those equally tragic days of the Babylonian exile, when the Temple was desecrated and the Jews oppressed. The nobleman Daniel and three other Jews were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king. Even in captivity they remained steadfast; every requirement of religious observance demanded by the Law they fulfilled—the daily provision of the king's meat and wine they would not taste, lest they defile themselves with forbidden food. Wise as well as pious was Daniel. He demonstrated his wisdom by his skill in interpreting the king's fantastic dream, as revealing the impending fate of four empires, one upon the other. For such wisdom, Daniel and his friends were amply rewarded. But on another occasion, when the king commanded all people to prostrate themselves and worship a golden image he had set up, and the three companions of Daniel refused to obey, he had them cast into a fiery furnace. They feared not: God, whose Law they observed, would save them. So He did, through the help of an angel; the fire was powerless, not even their hair did it singe, nor did their clothes smell of fire. Once again the king dreamt, this time of a tree which grew to heaven only to be cut down, which dream Daniel interpreted as the impending fall of the kingdom. Again, at the gorgeous feast of Belshazzar, Daniel read the "writing on the wall" to mean that the king had been "weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Daniel 5: 27). True enough, Darius the Mede did conquer Babylonia.

Darius then was prevailed upon to establish a statute that for thirty days whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man other than of Darius the king shall be thrust into the



den of lions. Regardless of the decree, Daniel openly continued his usual practice of facing Jerusalem for his prayers to God, thrice daily. There was no cause for Daniel to fear, for, being thrown into the lions' den for punishment, he found the protection of God's angel who helpfully shut the lions' mouths. So impressed was Darius that he proclaimed the God of Daniel the living God.

To Daniel himself came dreams or visions, four of them, which, in the form of symbols and riddles, predicted the successive rise and fall of the four empires under whose control the Jews came—even to Antiochus Epiphanes, "a vile person," who is destined to come to a helpless end. Ultimately, the angel Michael, guardian of Israel, will appear at a time of great trouble, such as never was before, "and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12: 2).

Hiding in their retreats, scrupulously adhering to the Law, waiting for the deliverance God would bring in some marvelous manner, the pious Hasidim never tired listening to a recital of Daniel's exploits and visions. Weighed down by the pressure Antiochus imposed, they needed some bracing. Forced to face the final test of allegiance—martyrdom—their will had to be steeled. What could strengthen the determination more effectively than the ideal embodied in an example, such as Daniel provided!

In the heat of the excitement, at the time (or just prior to the time) Judah the Maccabee won and rededicated the Temple, these traditions of Daniel were collected, and then preserved as a Book of the Bible. Historic and literary study—an analysis of the style, the use of Aramaic at times instead of Hebrew, the trend of thought, the inaccuracies and improbabilities—prove the Book of Daniel not a prediction of what was to happen during the four hundred years from the Babylonian Exile until the Maccabean uprising, but rather an interpretation, in the light of the Maccabean crisis, of what had happened during those centuries, an interpretation expressed for the sake of vividness, as though it were being predicted.

In the minds and souls of the Pious, however, Daniel was real. His piety served as a compelling model for their unswerving piety. His vision of Antiochus' defeat, of the Messianic age near at hand, of the resurrection of the righteous dead, this vision fired them with courage in the hour of greatest need; if die they must, they shall not have died in vain. "Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life"—this first clear reference in the Bible to resurrection and eternal reward nourished hope, a hope born in the extremity of martyrdom. Daniel, in short, lived in the very lives of the Hasidim. Thus inspired, the Hasidim achieved their immediate goal: the emancipation of their religion. And if they did not inaugurate the Messianic age, they did at any rate bring humanity one step nearer the visionary goal.

#### 24. JUDAISM EMERGES PURGED

SOON after the reconsecration of the Temple, Antiochus Epiphanes died, but that did not mean the end of Syrian provocation. True, a manner of peace was declared in 163 B.C.E., allowing Jews full freedom to live their Judaism; this came after they had all but lost the ground they had gained, and was made only because the Syrian army had to return to put its own house in order. Incidentally, before leaving, the Syrian General slew Menelaus, the pro-Hellenist high priest: he had had enough of him. But a new aspirant to the priesthood, named Alcimus, instigated further trouble. Because Alcimus was a descendant of the legitimate priestly house of Aaron, the Hasidim were the first to make peace with him, but, losing no time in showing himself a pro-Hellenist, Alcimus treacherously killed sixty scribes and many of the Pious who had placed themselves in his hands. He called the Syrians to his support, and as a result of that foolish act General Nicanor was sent with a formidable army and a determination to round up Judah the Maccabee and his brothers, as well as to destroy the Temple. In defeating Nicanor, Judah won the greatest battle of his career. The day of the victory, the thirteenth of Adar, was ordained an annual festival.

Two months later, while fighting against impossible odds, Judah died. His youngest brother Jonathan managed to achieve something in reconstructing the Jewish state by keeping friendly with the right side in the turmoil going on in Syria. He was acknowledged high priest, showered with honors, and then treacherously slain. His brother Simon, who followed as leader and high priest, did finally gain independence for Judea, through negotiations and treaties. No more tribute was to be paid to Syria. The burden was lifted. "The yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel" (I Macc. 13: 41). There was even an increase in the Judean territory. So auspicious were those days that the reign of Simon was counted a new era, all documents to begin their dating with the year 142 B.C.E.

The Hellenist party had now melted away. They were either absorbed by the enemy or they merged with loyalist kinfolk. But the tendency to pro-Hellenism did not entirely die out; it reappeared in another party which was forming, of which we shall read later on. The party of the Hasidim had also passed out of the limelight. They had achieved their object: religious freedom and undiluted Judaism. As soon as the religious objective had been gained the Hasidim withdrew their support. When, therefore, the Maccabees continued to fight and intrigue for only national gains, they incurred the ill-will of the Hasidim. Political quarrels and aspirations did not concern them; their work was finished. But of the Hasidim, too, we shall read more later on, when they reappear under another name.

All in all, the Maccabean struggle purged and strengthened the religion. The weak-willed had an opportunity to leave; the dead twigs were cut off, thus enabling the trunk of Judaism to grow more firmly and more vigorously. A period of tremendous propagandist zeal followed. The zeal overflowed into numerous religious documents. The Book of Daniel has already been mentioned. Many of the Psalms, those which encourage steadfast devotion to the Law and some which speak of persecution, belong to the Maccabean age.

The Book of Esther was probably written in these years, as

a narrative to reinforce the prayerful hope for deliverance even in darkest days, and to teach the need of loyalty among Jews, few and dispersed as they are. The story of Esther is supposed to have taken place when the Jews were under Persian rule, possibly during the first part of the fourth century B.C.E. It tells of the lot cast by wicked Haman, the king's advisor, for the execution of all the Jews; the lot singles out the thirteenth day of Adar. But through pious Mordecai's prompting, the king's beautiful Jewish wife, Esther, who is Mordecai's cousin, intervenes and saves her co-religionists. To commemorate the deliverance the annual festival of Purim ("casting of lots") is ordained for Adar the fourteenth. The coincidence in the date of the festival arising from General Nicanor's defeat by the Maccabees (Adar 13) with the date of Esther's festival (Adar 14) may possibly connect the Purim celebration with the victory over Nicanor. Whatever the connection or origin, the oppressions narrated in the Book of Esther are reminiscent of recurring crises in the struggle of the Jewish people to live on as a minority group, and of the loyalty required. Therefore Purim has told and retold its tale of hope to many generations.

## 25. THE BIBLE COMPLETED

Now the Bible was completed. All the Books had been written. For some time there remained a good deal of uncertainty which books should be included in the Bible collection, and which excluded. There was much argument and debate. Some thought the Book of Esther not religious enough in tone: not once did it mention God. Others objected to the lugubrious Book of Ecclesiastes; others, to the Song of Songs. Legend relates that the Book of Ezekiel, because of certain teachings contrary to the Pentateuch, was in danger of exclusion and was retained only because Rabbi Hananiah ben Hezekiah had a supply of three hundred jars of midnight oil to burn, until he had succeeded in harmonizing Ezekiel with the Pentateuch. The Books of Moses and the Prophetic Books had been for some time definitely estab-

lished, and accepted. But the later inclusions were really not decided upon, once for all, until the time of Rabbi Akiba, at the beginning of the second century C.E., and he decided not so much which books to include, but how many to exclude. Of the excluded books, some were recognized as closer to the spirit of Judaism than others; the Book of Ben Sira, for example, hung in the balance for generations and was perhaps the last to be excluded. Other books, some taking their cue from the eschatological and apocalyptic elements of Daniel, strayed wide from the accepted norm of Judaism, and their exclusion came with little hesitation.

A number of the books excluded from the Hebrew Bible became attached to the Greek translation, the Septuagint, and are known as the apocryphal books. Apocrypha means "hidden away." These writings are characterized as "hidden away" because, not held sacred in the sense that Bible Books are sacred, they were stored away, or possibly secreted away as dangerous to the unscholarly; as a result, they may have come to be considered hidden because they became so rare. In some instances, the actual origin or authorship is concealed, hence, "hidden away." Many of the books were written in Hebrew; others in Greek and under Greek influence.

The apocryphal books vary considerably among themselves, but in general one may characterize them as revolving about these central ideas: a high regard for the Law, great interest in the after-life where the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished, salvation of the nation through a Messiah, the resurrection of the righteous dead to enjoy the happiness of those days after the final judgment shall have taken place and God's Kingdom become established on earth. It is sufficient, in passing, to point out that some of the apocryphal books are historic in nature, such as I Esdras and I, II Maccabees; some are poetic and resemble prophecy, such as the Prayer of Azariah (also called the Song of Three Children), the Prayer of Manasses, the Book of Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremy; others belong to Wisdom Literature, such as the important Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), the Wisdom of Solomon; some are propagandist legends, such as Tobit,

Judith, Additions to Daniel (Bel and the Dragon), Susanna, Additions to Esther; and, finally, II Esdras is apocalyptic.

These writings did not enter the Hebrew Old Testament but did find a place in the Septuagint and also in the later Vulgate (Latin) translation. The Catholic Church, in the Council of Trent (1546), proclaimed them canonical. Therefore, they constitute *The Apocrypha*.

There are, however, a number of similar books, written during the same period, and likewise excluded from the Hebrew Old Testament—but they are not found in the Septuagint or the Vulgate translations, nor have they been canonized by the Catholic Church. These are specifically designated as The Pseudepigrapha (“falsely inscribed”), because the authorship was suppositiously attributed to famous characters of the past. It has been suggested that they were made pseudonymous because of the growing impression that prophecy had ceased: therefore, the contemporaneous authors resorted to this device to gain a hearing.

The Pseudepigrapha includes mainly books on the apocalyptic theme of the End of Days, such as I Enoch (the oldest, lengthiest and most important), The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Sibylline Oracles, The Assumption of Moses, II Enoch (Book of the Secrets of Enoch), II Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch), III Baruch (Greek Apocalypse of Baruch). Moreover, there is history, as in III Maccabees, and The Fragments of a Zadokite Work; there is history rewritten with a moral, as in The Book of Jubilees; there are sacred legends, as in The Letter of Aristeas, The Books of Adam and Eve, The Martyrdom of Israel; there are the Psalms of Solomon; there is Wisdom Literature, as in IV Maccabees, Pirke Abot (which entered the main stream of Judaism through inclusion in the Mishnah), and The Story of Ahikar.

Most of this excluded literature was written during and after the Maccabean age, extending approximately from 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E., and coinciding with that period during which was fixed the limit as to which books the Bible should include.

This literature, because of its exclusion from the Bible, played but a secondary part in the molding of Judaism. The Bible had come to be regarded as divinely revealed in an especial sense and therefore nothing outside the Bible could possibly acquire the attention of even the weakest verse of the Testament. The ideas and attitudes of The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were subjected to selective treatment: some were entirely rejected by the subsequent formulative forces of Judaism; others were worked upon and fashioned into recognized Jewish material in the rabbinic writings; still others found welcome acceptance in the ranks of Christian thought.

The completion of the Bible (the Old Testament) brings to a culmination the myriads of influences—environmental factors, national factors, personal factors—which entered in the evolutionary making and remaking of the religion of the Jew. Once the Bible was authoritatively accepted and canonized it presented as a unit the first completed stage in the unfolding of Judaism. Let it not be imagined, however, that Judaism can be disjoined at any one particular point and considered a finished product. On the contrary, it is a continuous chain of tradition. The full acceptance of the Biblical Books, as we have observed, was itself spread over several centuries. Also, by the time the Bible was concluded, new forces, new activities, new movements, were already in full swing, ceaselessly conditioning the growth of the religion. It is true, though, that whatever the further flux of Judaism, the teachings of the Bible were accepted as the starting point, the nucleus, the inviolable Constitution of Jewish life. It would be well then to summarize the religion of the Bible and to judge how much had been accomplished since the primitive nomadic days of Israel's beginning.

## 26. RELIGION OF THE BIBLE

IN summarizing Biblical Judaism it is important to remember that the Bible is the result of a long and continuous process, covering more than two thousand years in the influence which

it reflects, and all of one thousand years in the range of its authorship. Within the covers of the Old Testament are contained vestigial remains and reminiscences of the crude, pre-Israelite paganism, prior to the third millennium B.C.E., as well as the most advanced and most enlightened discoveries of spiritual values in life, whose date reaches into the second century B.C.E. That is the primary value of the Old Testament, the unique and compact record which it presents of man's unsteady religious growth.

Speaking to us the words of many, many generations, out of a wide variety of circumstances, Scripture does not speak with a single voice. Its message is not smooth, consistent, all parts of homogeneous viewpoint, nor even of equal grade and value. There are inconsistencies, fragmentary elements, inferior and superior teachings. But we have no standardized Biblical Judaism, as such; no set religion of Scripture, which might lend itself to systematic outline. Many and varied are the approaches to an understanding of God; many and varied are the deductions as to what the existence of God should mean to man.

The historic survey of the evolution of the religion of Bible days has already shown the diversity of ideas and ideals. It has also shown a forward movement. Religion is not static. It moves forward. Sensitive souls reveal new truths. Crises in circumstances create new concepts. History and nature combine under the forces of destiny to fashion new trends of thought. So, as man's comprehension deepens, religion progresses.

We have seen too that the pace of progress is not constant. The application of the religious principle to life fluctuates from generation to generation. In many regards it was more intense and truer amongst the Jews of the sixth century B.C.E. than amongst their descendants of the third century B.C.E. There may be a step forward, two back, then three forward, and so on, but ultimately the direction is forward. What was a rare discovery to one generation becomes the accepted truth for a succeeding generation. The lone voice of the prophet



in one century becomes the clamor of the masses in another century. Thus religion emerges not only finer and better, but also expanded and more extensively part of life.

Certain fundamentals do underlie the entire development in the Bible era, as a common denominator for all the varied concepts. For increased clarity in understanding the unfolding of Judaism, they are worth mentioning.

The Bible does not argue as to whether God does or does not exist. In certain of the more daring passages, as in the Book of Job, the ways of God are unflinchingly questioned and debated, but always there is the agreement—God is. Only the fool saith in his heart, “there is no God” (Psalm 14: 1). That is all there is to it. Those whose words we read in holy Scripture experienced God directly, they felt His influence, they heard His voice, they beheld His power, and to them God’s presence was beyond the point of argument.

Personal experience of an unusual nature is therefore the authority in the teachings of the Bible. Those who speak in the name of God have communed with the divine by means of a vision or a dream, a revelation or a phenomenon of nature, a national or a personal crisis, the voice of conscience or of reason, and theirs is the right to speak because of the unique guidance which they have received.

In the origins of many historic religions, there is but one religious leader, one exemplary character, one who conveys the direct word of God to humanity. It is a distinctive characteristic of Judaism that the revelation of divine truth came progressively, through many lives, in divers environs. It arises from the experience of an entire people and is therefore all the more applicable to the life of an entire people. True it is that Moses gave to the religion the initial impetus which elevated it above the level ever achieved by religion, but it is not true to refer to Judaism as the Mosaic faith. Were the prophets—Amos or Deutero-Isaiah, for example—less vital in the growth of the religion? The Old Testament is by no means the record of but one life, one personality, one example. First the Patriarchs, then Moses, then the prophets

and priests, then the scribes and the Pious, all contributed toward shaping the growth of Judaism.

The working of God, the way of God — not at all the question as to whether He exists — is the theme of the religion of the Bible. Those who have felt God's presence are concerned primarily with telling of His functioning and with correcting previous and less true notions of God. The authors of the Bible discover through personal and national experience that all nature originates from, moves, and is sustained by the will, the wisdom and the power of God — that vital energy is the spirit of God. Likewise, in the life of man and mankind do they discover the moral powers of God, that He is perfect in goodness, loving-kindness, justice, knowledge and truth: one explorer in the realm of the spirit recognizes one phase of God's rule of morality; another recognizes another phase, until, in the end, God's complete moral sovereignty is revealed. The grandeur of their achievement is the fusion of religion with ethics, of God with goodness and truth, of wisdom with piety.

Man is a child of God, part and parcel of the vast pattern of life. Therefore man must strive to be like unto God. If God is holy, man must be holy. If God insists on justice, man must insist on justice. If God is kind and forgiving, man must be kind and forgiving. That is the quintessence of Biblical Judaism. The luxury of disconnected and unapplied speculation on God's attributes finds hardly any indulgence in the Bible. God is always personal, always sensed intimately. He enters every mood the heart can know, every impulse, every thought, and the nature of His presence — which theologians call His attribute — conditions the response in man's conduct.

The most persistent spiritual struggle in the Biblical growth of Judaism, we have seen, is the uphill climb to reach the vision of One God, and the majestic victory in that struggle is voiced in the words: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Dt. 6:4). As a mathematical statement these words mean nothing, for if they have no moral and ethical application, what great difference would it make if

there were two or twenty gods! As a statement of religion — religion, we must remember, ties man to God — the unitary conception of God is the extreme in importance. If God is one, that means that God is the Soul of all that is, the creator and principle of all life, incorporeal and changeless, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient; that means that good and bad are a unit, that light and darkness are a unit, that all existence and all experience must be viewed as a unit; that means that there is only One God of all nature, all nations, all history, all mankind. But, above all, that means that man must act toward his neighbor in such wise as is consistent with the realization that One God created them both; man must learn to accept good and bad in such wise as is consistent with the realization that both good and bad make up a harmonious unit; man must appreciate that the moral law demands obedience, with the threat of punishment, even as the natural law demands obedience, with the threat of punishment — for both are the Law of One God. “Verily there is a God that judges the earth” (Psalm 58: 11).

It is clear, then, that man’s understanding of the character of God must determine his own attitude and action. The rich diversity of Biblical metaphor and poetic fancy is evidence of the many facets that revealed the character of God and the corresponding human conduct which was requisite. In the earliest of times, when the divine was considered whimsical and capricious, the main effort was naturally in the direction of cajoling and bribing the divine. In the highest plane of Biblical vision, when intelligence, love and righteousness were viewed as divine, as more than human, the main effort was to emulate the example of God, and thus to gather strength in the knowledge that intelligence, love and righteousness will in the end prevail: “God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever” (Psalm 73: 26).

Adhering closely to the experiences of life, the religion of the Bible endeavors to unravel the knotty problem of evil. That is the eternal question. Why should evil exist? Why should man suffer? If there were no God, there would be no problem, for if all were merely blind accident and no more,

there would be no rhyme nor reason to anything that happened: we would be but human footballs kicked about by the accidents of chance. Such a thought, however, is more difficult to accept than it is to seek an answer to the question of evil. One must, before all else, account for the regulated order of nature and the wondrous miracle of life and the mysteries of the human soul, and to account for all that, one must begin with God. But then, how account for evil?

The dominant trend in the Bible is optimistic. All in all, life is good, or can be made good. There is, however, something in the very nature of man that makes him do wrong, that makes him violate the requirements of God — for sin is an offense against God. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). Why is man so constructed? God alone knows. For his sins man suffers, for the sins of the nation too. We do know that repentance accompanied by change of conduct will bring forgiveness — "Return unto the Lord, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7); by His grace God punishes less than is deserved — "The Lord is near unto all that call upon Him" (Psalm 145:18) — to help and comfort; and finally there is the hope for the golden age to which we are moving, when the knowledge of the Lord and the accompanying reign of righteous dealing, peace, compassion, and all the virtues will fill the earth. Most challenging are the Biblical passages which insist that suffering cleanses the soul, that it is not necessarily punishment for one's personal sins but rather the means for creating a better world: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Proverbs 3:12). The knowledge that suffering is not always the resultant evidence of sinfulness is fortifying: "Unless Thy Law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction" (Psalm 119:92). Does that entirely solve the problem of sin and suffering? At least one Biblical author, the author of the Book of Job, does not think so. "Canst Thou by searching find out God? Canst Thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). We can know God, and we cannot know God. We can fathom His ways only so far, and no more.

In the foregoing pages we have traced the processes of religious growth. We have followed the forces which gave birth to the Jewish religion and we have kept them in view for the first two thousand years. This period which reaches its culmination in the completion of the Bible was one of discovery, of change, of flux, of growth. It was a period of healthy seeking for new truth and of healthy modification of the old in the light of the new. With the finding of new truth came the creation of new ceremonials and rituals, new religious institutions and practices, expressive of and in harmony with that new truth. The animal sacrifices of the Temple were replaced by the prayers of the synagogue. The importance of ritualistic rectitude was replaced by an emphasis on moral rectitude as pleasing to God.

Striking was the series of transitions in the conception of Israel's place in the world. History seemed to have definitely selected Israel as a chosen people: because Yahweh had saved Israel from Egypt, it was thought that they were to be His favorites; then, because they themselves were punished for wickedness, it was realized that they had been saved only because the Egyptians had violated the moral rights of the Israelites, and God would have done as much for any people; and ultimately came the appreciation that because Israel had been spared by God, Israel was chosen for a life of service, not privilege, a career of privation to bring salvation to the world: "Ye are My witnesses that I am God" (Isaiah 43: 12). From first to last the Jewish people saw meaning and purpose — God — in the events of life, and with increasing insight into the lessons of life did they learn the rules of life.

So religion grows. First there must be the vigor to grow: in this creative phase of its career Judaism grew vigorously. But there must also be the rigor to endure. There then comes a period of crystallization, of stabilization, of codification, of the test of time. That is the next episode in the story of Judaism.

CHAPTER II

*HOW A RELIGION LIVES ON*

[RABBINIC JUDAISM]

I. THE ORAL CHAIN OF TRADITION

BY THE time the Bible was completed, the Jewish religion had grown from the simple response to a pastoral life into a complex response to a variegated urban and rural life. Many forces now interacted and played upon the original theme given out by Moses. New notes could now be heard in the symphonic form which Judaism came to resemble. Some notes were strident: the blaring trumpeting of Syrian Hellenism, which clashed with the clarion-call of Judaism, drowning it in the ears of many. Other notes harmonized with the main theme, giving it warmth and depth. The interplay of moods worked itself into the dominant theme—the original one, elaborated and enriched. The Torah remained dominant. The Maccabean crisis had silenced, for a while, the Hellenistic discord, and the motif of the scribes (teachers in the schools and synagogues), which was becoming more and more audible since Ezra's day, now sounded forth.

Even before the Bible reached completion, the ever-changing conditions of the environment made requisite an interpretation of Law read into the Bible, to apply to the changing requirements. The words of the Written Law—once accepted and enshrined—could not be altered, but their meanings could be many and diverse. Words soon became freighted with connotations, and the connotations extracted from the letter of the Law were employed to meet the needs of each generation. These connotations—what the Bible implies in addition to what it actually says—are known as the

Oral Law, and they form the basis of the rabbinic stage of Judaism.

It is not impossible for these oral amplifications of the Law to have begun with Moses and to have been handed on by him to Joshua, then to the elders, then to the prophets, then to the Men of the Great Synagogue and the scribes. This is what a rabbinic statement would have us believe. It is not difficult to believe, when we realize the host of traditional accoutrements which accompany, almost inevitably, most formulations of law and literature. How much originated before the time of Ezra is uncertain; the amount estimated varies according to the particular approach to the subject, whether it be historically critical or orthodox.

Both the traditional and the untraditional scholars accept Ezra the Scribe as the starting point for the ascendancy of the transmitted unwritten Law. According to the lore of tradition, Moses had received the entire Oral Law at the Mountain of God and had given it to the Israelites by word of mouth; when, in the course of vicissitudes, the unrecorded words were forgotten, Ezra came and restored them. According to the facts of history, too, we know how, in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., Ezra brought from Babylon the Book of the Law of Moses, which he read publicly in Jerusalem and which the Levites then and there explained.

The Great Synagogue (Assembly), convened under Ezra's leadership to promulgate decrees necessary at that time, is reckoned the next link in the endless chain which carried on the oral tradition. This institution is said to have connected the last of the prophets with the first of the scribes. Meeting from time to time, the Assembly is credited with having finished collecting the last of the Books of the Bible and also with having established the traditional manner of interpreting the Bible. (Likewise the Feast of Purim, the Shemoneh-esreh and other important prayers, are traced to the Great Assembly.) To the Men of the Great Synagogue is attributed the motto which characterizes the whole development of Rabbinic Judaism (Talmud: Abot 1: 1): "Be deliberate in giving judgment; raise up many disciples; make a hedge for the

Torah." To study the Law in the light of all its probabilities and possibilities before establishing a decision, to pass on the inherited instruction to the next generation of scholars, all for the purpose of guarding the Law and the manner of life it demands—this which the motto implies did indeed become the influencing principle in the growth of the Oral Law.

There is considerable dispute as to whether the Great Synagogue ever existed in reality, but in the absence of any outside information we must allow tradition and historic likelihood to guide us. The likelihood is that the institution did exist, that the scribes did convene in congress whenever necessary, to make religious decisions and to give them authority; being primarily teachers, they were in a strategic position individually and privately to teach the new ordinances they had agreed upon.

The high priest Simeon is counted one of the last of the Men of the Great Synagogue. So far as we can ascertain, he lived at the end of the third century B.C.E., being an older contemporary of Ben Sira. Simeon the Righteous, is the name given him to distinguish him from the corrupt high priests who succeeded him. Indeed, until the time of Simeon, the scribes were content to leave the regulation of the ritual in the hands of the priests, but with the deterioration of the priesthood, the scribes themselves undertook to study and direct the ritual practices in conformity with the Torah. An important doctrine of the Oral Law—"the world rests on three pillars, on the Torah, on worship, and on beneficence" (Abot 1: 2)—is attributed to Simeon the Righteous. His colleague, Antigonus of Soko, gained renown with the saying: "Be not like servants who serve their masters with the expectation of receiving a gratuity; but be like servants who serve their master without the expectation of receiving a gratuity; let the fear of Heaven be upon you" (Abot 1: 3). In other words, live an ideal life, not because that will bring you a reward, but because it is the life God demands. Not virtue for reward's sake, nor virtue for virtue's sake, but



virtue for God's sake: that is the cornerstone of Jewish ethics.

The next link in the living chain of tradition comprises "The Pairs," that is, a grouping in which two scholars represent each of the subsequent generations up to and including that of Shammai and Hillel, who lived just at the beginning of the Common Era. The two names may indicate the president and vice-president of each generation's Assembly of the learned. We have to assume that, for not enough is known of "The Pairs." Actually the list according to generations is far from complete; only five pairs, at most, are mentioned.

The first pair, Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Johanan, lived in the distressing days under Antiochus Epiphanes. Several decrees are recorded in their names, the first time in the development of the Oral Law that specific individuals are named as authorities for new decrees. "Let thy house be a meeting place of the learned, and sit in the dust at their feet and thirstily drink in their words" (Abot 1:4), is the advice of Jose ben Joezer, which leaves no doubt as to his advocacy of the Law; for it he is reported to have died, through the treachery of Alcimus, the Hellenist high priest.

That a self-sacrificing zeal for the Law had been built up by the first half of the second century B.C.E. is evidenced in the rally of the Pious to the defence of their religion when Antiochus Epiphanes dared assail it. After religious freedom was secured, the Pious receded into the background where they busied themselves enjoying the bravely won right to study and live their Judaism.

## 2. WHEN RELIGION STOPS GROWING

SIMON, the last of the five Maccabee brothers, managed to win recognition for Judea's hard-won independence. One would think that enough. But his son, John (Johanan, in Hebrew) Hyrcanus, who succeeded as sovereign from 135 to 104 B.C.E., insisted on pushing on with aggressive warfare. Ambition tempted him to try out some of the bad tactics he learned

from his neighbors: he used mercenary troops to strengthen the army; when conquering an enemy he sought to impose his own religion upon them, as was done to the Idumeans in the south. These items deserve mention because, beyond this period of Hasmonean (the Maccabean dynasty) avidity, they have no parallel. They are the isolated exceptions which prove the rule of political pacifism, and non-interference with the religion of others—for these are principles which reside deeply in the substance and record of Judaism.

A great achievement of John Hyrcanus, in his own eyes at any rate, was the conquest of Shechem, the main city of Judea's chronic foes, the half-breed Samaritans. More than that, he tore to the ground the temple on Mount Gerizim which the Samaritans had put up as a rival to that of Jerusalem. The existence of this temple had always been a thorn to the Jews. There it had stood, an embarrassing challenge to the claim of Jerusalem as the only legitimate place where sacrifice and all the minutiae of the sacrificial cult could be practiced. Even prudent and self-restrained Ben Sira could not control his vexation: "Two nations my soul abhorreth; and the third is no people: the inhabitants of Seir and Philistia and the foolish nation that dwelleth in Shechem" (50: 25).

In certain particulars, the religion of the Samaritans resembled that of the Jews. That partial resemblance might have diminished the feeling of annoyance, but instead added fuel to the resentment. It was Judaism, yet not Judaism: an imitation that lacked the vitality of the genuine thing. True, the Samaritans believed in the One God, in Moses the supreme prophet, and hoped for a Messiah and then a resurrection of the dead. But, in contrast to Judaism, the Samaritan religion did not grow, did not change with changing circumstances, did not move onward to meet the needs of each new generation, did not keep pace with the advance of mankind. It stagnated.

The contrast, growing ever wider as time went on, becomes clear when we compare the religion of modern Jews with that of the less-than-a-hundred Samaritans surviving in Palestine today. They still have the Jewish Bible, in the original

old Hebrew script as a matter of fact, but that Bible consists of only the Five Books of Moses—all else, the second division of the Bible, the Prophets, and the third division, the Hagiographa, they have deliberately rejected. They observe the Jewish Passover Festival. But one would never imagine it the same festival. Whereas in Judaism, the Passover celebration was transferred from sacrifices in the Temple to prayers and sermons in the synagogue where the goal of human freedom is stressed and to the home where a cheerful Seder Dinner revitalizes family ties,—the Samaritans to this day retain the crude, repulsive practice of slaughtering a lamb, roasting it in a pit in the ground, smearing the blood and devouring the food in its entirety before dawn. In our generation we witness the falling of the final curtain, terminating the rôle of the Samaritan religion, and in that sad spectacle we have convincing evidence of what is destined to happen when religion stops growing. Samaritanism today is not even a remnant; it is a relic of the past. Judaism did not likewise become a relic because, unlike Samaritanism, it continued to live and thrive, nourished by the expanding Oral Law.

### 3. WHO WERE THE PHARISEES? HOW DID THEY KEEP THE RELIGION DEMOCRATIC?

THE silent students of the Torah made themselves heard during the reign of John Hyrcanus. They voiced a protest. A leader in war should not occupy the office of high priest. The two do not, and should not, go together. If it were a war to wrest religious freedom from the clutch of a tyrant, that might be a different matter. But the high priest, John Hyrcanus, was fighting for political power, also to square a few national accounts of long standing. How remote from the qualifications for the highest religious office of the land! The devotees of the Torah would have no more of this unholy combination. Priests in power and families of influence, of course, could see no sense in the objection. The objectionists were as yet a minority group and, unable to prevail, could express their opposition only by withdrawing their

support. They thus earned the name, Pharisees, which means: "those who separate themselves." The supporters of Hyrcanus as high priest were Sadducees, "Zadokites," since the ideal priesthood, according to Ezekiel, had derived from the family of Zadok; moreover, many of the supporters were themselves descendants of Zadok. This is one theory of the origin of the names of the two factions.

There are other theories, too. It is difficult to designate with certainty the precise origin. Historic evidence is conspicuously absent. When objective information is most desired, historic records seem to remain discreetly silent. The difference between the Sadducees and Pharisees, and the nature of another group referred to as the Essenes, are determining factors in the trend of religion during the all-important century before and century after the beginning of the Common Era. In an attempt to reconstruct the events of these centuries there is wide difference of opinion; estimates differ according to the angle of approach. Even the earliest appraisals of the Pharisees are in conflict: the Talmud views them favorably; the New Testament, unfavorably.

An ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, mentions the three divisions, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, as existing in the days of Jonathan, some twenty-five or thirty years earlier than the above-mentioned conflict with John Hyrcanus. He records also that John Hyrcanus was at first in line with the Pharisees and well thought-of by them, but that because of some personal quarrel he joined with the Sadducees — who until now opposed the Hasmoneans as high priests — and discountenanced and annulled the Pharisaic ordinances, to the extent of punishing the observance of them. This description by Josephus is given serious consideration because he wrote it only two hundred years after the date of these events. Accordingly, a number of scholars surmise that the name Pharisees — "those who separate themselves" — was first applied to the Hasidim who separated themselves from Judah Maccabeus' political campaign, after he had achieved the religious victory, all that the Hasidim themselves had desired.

Whatever the origins, the Pharisees made their appearance

in history in the opposition to John Hyrcanus. As the years passed, the restrictions on their practices impelled them to rally the masses to sedition, but they were quelled. The breach widened with the continued political ascendancy — but spiritual decline — of the Hasmonean dynasty. Hyrcanus' son and successor, Aristobulus, assumed the full title, king, as well as high priest. He strove to decorate his title with the trappings of Hellenism; a Philo-Hellene, a lover of the Greeks, he called himself. The kingly dignity required him to better the example of his father, so he vanquished Galilee in the north and the Itureans in the Lebanon — again, like his father, trying to force the defeated to swallow Judaism. Fortunately, his reign lasted but a single year. But that did not help matters. His brother, Alexander Jannaeus, who succeeded him, continued the same policy: the employment of mercenaries, conquest, forced conversion. That surely could not meet with the approval of the Pharisees.

There was no question as to the unpopularity of Alexander Jannaeus. On one occasion, a feast in honor of a campaign, King Alexander, who had come robed as high priest, was calmly advised by one of the guests to leave off wearing the sacred robes of the priesthood, to be satisfied with the royal accoutrements. On another occasion, the disapproval was expressed more tangibly. The king was pelted with citrons. It was during the Feast of Tabernacles, when the people held the citron in their hands as part of the religious ceremony, but a new use was found for the fruit when the king, officiating as high priest, failed to perform a duty in the manner the Pharisees expected. And they shouted at him that, by law, he could not serve as priest, inasmuch as his mother had been a captive. The demonstration cost six thousand lives. Civil war resulted at the first opportune opening, when the king had been seriously defeated by the Arabs. Fifty thousand more lives. The people then called the Syrians for help — fancy calling the erstwhile oppressors for help against a Maccabean king! To what extremes they were driven! After the monarch was put to flight, many of the people regretted their move and, out of shame mingled with

fear of the Syrians, returned to the side of Alexander to quash the insurrection. The restoration of peace was commemorated by crucifying eight hundred of the opposition die-hards; eight thousand others fled for their lives.

Peace, of a happier variety, came when Alexander Jannaeus died and his widow Alexandra reigned, with the elder son Hyrcanus in the office of high priest. On his deathbed, the dying king urged his queen to avoid the ill-will of the nation, to put some power in the hands of the Pharisees who had great authority among the Jews, both to injure such as hated them and to bring advantage to those who were friendly disposed to them. He also cautioned her against the hypocrites who posed as Pharisees. Queen Alexandra followed this good advice. The true Pharisees—only a small fraction of the Pharisees were hypocrites, contrary to dictionary definitions—the religious people who wanted to live by the Oral and Written Law, now came into their own. Under the leadership of Simeon ben Shetah, said to have been a brother of the queen, the Pharisees were allowed to practice again the ordinances which John Hyrcanus had abrogated. Incidentally, one ordinance of Simeon ben Shetah amends the Marriage Contract (*Ketubah*) to give fuller rights to the woman: how appropriate that the extension of women's rights should come during the reign of a queen! Simeon ben Shetah is also credited with the establishment of schools (*Bet ha-Sefer*) for children, where the larger body of Jews could come to learn their religious traditions and regulations.

The distinctive features of the Pharisees can already be discerned. "A certain sect of the Jews that appear more religious than others, and seem to interpret the laws more precisely," is the description the historian Josephus gives ("The Jewish War," I, 5: 2 § 110) and it is a fairly accurate one, except that they could hardly be termed a sect. Their thoroughgoing obedience to the written and unwritten Torah connects the Pharisees with their forerunners, the Hasidim. Under the scribes they studied the Jewish tradition of accumulated ordinances, to live by them.

Religion is their primary interest. They want to stay apart

from the ambitious politics of the state. They want to stay apart from the heathens. They want to stay apart as a group specially dedicated to a life of holiness. They want to keep separate from ritual uncleanness and forbidden food. They want to keep separate from the Am ha-Arez, the ignorant man-in-the-street, who, not observing the ritual law strictly, might contaminate them. These are the many shades of meaning the term Pharisees — “those who separate themselves” — may have, and the origin of the name has been traced to one or more of these meanings. In addition, it may be that the appellation was tagged onto them, in the first instance, in derision by those who scorned their claims to exclusive purity, or because of their distinctive garb which separated them.

The teachings of the Pharisees become clear when we compare them with the position of the Sadducees, those who sided with the priestly aristocracy. For the Pharisees, the Torah was an all-sufficient guide for both state and religion; the Sadducees separated the two and even allowed foreign Greek influences to operate in the state. The Pharisees taught that everything is in God's hands, excepting that man has a degree of free-will; the Sadducees allowed for no measure of fate. The Pharisees, denying the authority of the Hasmonean priests, preached that the Messiah-to-come will be of Davidic descent; the Sadducees insisted that he will arise from the priestly house of Levi. The Pharisees hoped for a Day of Judgment and for the resurrection; the Sadducees, believing in neither the resurrection nor the immortality of the soul, looked to political power to bring happier days into being.

Most important was the difference of view with regard to the Torah. Both held the Written Torah divine and binding. The Pharisees added tradition as likewise divine and binding; the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees agreed to believe and do only that which is explicitly written in the Torah. The Pharisees, whose teachers had seen the necessity in ever-changing circumstances to modify, alter or enlarge upon the Written Law, looked upon the manifold oral traditions and ordinances, which emergencies forced them to add, as mere extensions of the original Law, inherent in it and therefore

equally binding. This latter view, of course, left room for continuous growth and progress. It made the Bible live anew with each generation, as religion should.

The Pharisees, taking religious control out of the hands of the priests, sought to make the entire nation a priest people, thus carrying out the principle of religious democracy. Pharisaism brought religion to the masses. In the schools of the Pharisees the scribes taught and in the synagogues they preached. Their message was stern but invigorating: whatever free-will man has it is his duty to employ, to direct his conduct in the right channels; careful observance of the Law and undiscouraged prayer will in the end bring the Kingdom of God on earth.

As between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, it was the Pharisees who carried the middle classes with them. They maintained their popular strength right through the political quarrels which followed Queen Alexandra's death (67 B.C.E.). At first the Sadducees won a victory, in supporting Aristobulus, Alexander's younger son, for king and high priest as against Hyrcanus (II), the elder son. But that was not the end of it. Hyrcanus, a rather lame candidate for the highest office, soon found a crutch in the none-too-altruistic support of Antipater, one of the recently captured and Judaized Idumeans—a politician *par excellence*. The participation of a foreigner in the conflict which was largely religious was not at all to the liking of the pious element. Real piety persisted even during the wrangling for the spoils of religious officialdom. But it was of a nature which would not obtrude itself into historic record unless it took a dramatic turn, as in the case of this dispute for office when Aristobulus found shelter within the Temple fortifications, from Antipater's offensive. Each of the two factions approached Onias, one of saintly reputation, to pray for the defeat of the other faction—an abuse of religion, resorted to in nearly every instance of warfare. Onias fearlessly came out to pray: "O God, King of the Universe, since those that are within the enclosure and those that are outside are both Thy people, accept Thou the prayers of neither faction." Even if it had not been recorded,



it would be easy to guess the warriors' response to such a prayer: the saint was stoned to death.

The Pharisees were exasperated with both claimants to the throne. When representations on behalf of the two brothers were made to Pompey, General of the Roman armies whose power was creeping over the land, the people commissioned their own deputation to ask for no king at all, but to re-establish the old priestly régime. The factions played into Pompey's hands. The conquering Roman, having sized up the situation, saw his chance to clutch Judea in his mighty hand. In the attack, his soldiers broke through the Temple walls, entered the Temple, slaughtered unperturbed priests, but otherwise the Temple was not desecrated nor were the treasures touched. Aristobulus and his children were taken captive to Rome; recently Judaized provinces were annexed to the Roman province of Syria and placed under the rule of the Syrian Proconsul; Hyrcanus II was returned as high priest, but high priest only.

Thus, in the year 63 B.C.E., after the Judean Kingdom had expanded in trade and territory to the reputed dimensions under King Solomon, Pompey picked up the kingdom and snipped it into segments. Thus, too, ended the miserable experiment in forcing conversions.

Three attempts by Aristobulus and his two sons to throw off the Roman yoke failed. In the Roman ups and downs, Antipater, Hyrcanus' crutch, managed to ally himself to the winning side — proving his skill as a strategist. Because of his help in bringing about Cæsar's Egyptian victory in 47 B.C.E., the Jews recovered lost territory and also the right for Hyrcanus to call himself Ethnarch, hereditary head of the nation. Then, upon Cæsar's death, several years later, reaction set in. Antipater was poisoned, but his Roman friend Antony appointed Antipater's two sons, Herod and Phasaël, as Tetrarchs, co-rulers of the Jews, reducing Hyrcanus to high priest once more — a position bereft of political power.

The fortunes of war then brought victory to the Parthians, forcing Rome to relax her grip on Judea. Antigonus, one of the Hasmoneans, thereupon assumed the kingly rôle. To

disqualify Hyrcanus from ever again serving as high priest his enemies mutilated him. Of Antipater's sons—Phasael, taken captive, ended his own life, while Herod escaped to Rome. In Rome the Senate endowed Herod with the title, King of the Jews. With this title Herod set forth to stake his claims. He succeeded in his war against Antigonus, and became king in fact as in name, from 37 to 4 B.C.E. Even so, the masses of Jews continued to oppose Herod. He was not of royal blood nor of the Jewish people; his kingship was imposed by Rome and Roman soldiers; he was responsible for Antony's order to behead Antigonus, the last of the Hasmoneans: therefore was he never accepted.

Herod inherited his father's skill as a politician. As such, he sought to please both Rome and Judea, to carry water, as it were, on both shoulders. That sort of acrobatics can hold out for only a limited time. Earlier, Herod had married Miriam, a Hasmonean, to please the people; she persuaded him to appoint her brother high priest. It was not anticipated that the brother would prove a rallying figure for the people and when he did become that he was put to death; also Queen Miriam, her mother, and all the other Hasmoneans and Sadducees whom Herod suspected and could lay hands on, were disposed of during the tragic course of Herod's reign. For the office of high priest, Herod alternately put in and took out puppets of his own. In all but strictly religious matters, he took to himself administrative and executive control, leaving the Sanhedrin of the people with many powers to talk but with few to act. As a diplomatic concession or perhaps for his own glorification, Herod spent a good deal of time and money on the reconstruction of the Temple. At the same time, he catered to the taste of Rome with a temple in Samaria for the emperor-worship, and with the introduction generally of Greek theatres, Greek games and Greek savants.

To maintain his balance of power, Herod manipulated to keep on good terms with the Pharisees. He allowed them to regulate their religious life, to become absorbed in their studies and practices. In the earlier part of his reign, Shemaiah and Abtalion, one of "The Pairs," stood out as

Pharisaic teachers. Their best disciple was Hillel, who had come from Babylonia. Hillel coupled with his contemporary Shammai are counted the last of "The Pairs," and with them begins the new designation for scholars: Tannaim.

#### 4. HILLEL AND SHAMMAI

THE temperaments of Shammai and Hillel are presented as contrasts. Shammai, strict; Hillel, lenient. Their backgrounds differ too. Shammai, living in Jerusalem, grew up in the hub of the traditional interpretation of the Law; Hillel in Babylonia, outside the immediate center, had found it necessary to resort more to the written word, therefrom to deduce specific applications for the day. Thus, Shammai was conservative while Hillel was progressive. These differences in background and temperament brought to the study of the Law differences of opinion which, while disturbing at that time and giving rise to the fear of a division in the Law, resulted actually in a broader development of the Law. The few differences between Hillel and Shammai increased to hundreds with their disciples, who came to be grouped as the "School of Hillel" and the "School of Shammai." On several occasions the two schools met to iron out their disagreements and to decide issues by majority vote. The cherished details of the scholarly contest between Hillel and Shammai picture the healthy method of development of the religious Law — the scholastic freedom, the keen competition in the search for truth, and victory for the side of moderation. The tendencies introduced by Hillel prevailed, by the end of the first century C.E., and thus made the Law less restrictive.

A prominent instance of Hillel's liberality in interpreting the Biblical Law is his "Prosbul" innovation, modifying the law, found in the Book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 15), which states that all debts be cancelled every seventh (Sabbatical) year. Naturally there was much reluctance to make a loan at any date close to the Sabbatical year, for then it would not have to be paid; consequently, those who needed the money urgently were obliged to suffer. The regulation

which may have been helpful originally now proved hurtful. Human considerations as well as accommodation to changed conditions demanded modification. Hillel therefore arranged for a special document according to which the creditor could collect the debt through the courts, even after the Sabbatical year. Such an innovation was daring indeed: it practically set aside a law of the Bible, the revelation of God.

Out and out to annul any Biblical law would be out of the question. Modification had to grow out of the law itself, as though to make explicit what is implicit in the law. The words of the Bible are comparable to seeds which have it within themselves to grow into a tree with branches and buds which blossom forth: all is contained within the original seed. All the modifications exist in the Torah, but await discovery through certain rules of logical interpretation. These are called hermeneutic rules.

Seven hermeneutic rules Hillel established as the accepted method. The first rule is, to draw an inference from a minor or major regulation; for example, if a specified type of labor is allowed on the Sabbath, it is proper to infer that the same work is surely permissible on a lesser holiday; also, that if a specified type of labor is prohibited on a lesser holiday it is all the more forbidden on the Sabbath. The second rule is the analogy of expressions or instances, the occurrence of the same or similar words in two separate verses, presenting an analogy; for example, one Bible passage regulates that on the Day of Atonement the soul shall be "afflicted," without designating the meaning of affliction, but quite another passage associates "affliction" with hunger and want—hence, hunger (fasting) should be the nature of the affliction on the Day of Atonement. The third rule is, to generalize from one specific provision, if the application is general; for example, the law not to take a mill or millstone as a pledge has been made by the Bible so as not to deprive a poor debtor of his tools for preparing food—therefore, nothing which is used for preparing food may be taken as a pledge. The fourth rule is, to generalize from two specific provisions; for example, the law

that if a man smite the eye of a servant and destroy it, he shall let the servant go free, and also the law that if he smite out his servant's tooth he shall let the servant go free: both deal with the loss of important members of the body which cannot be replaced, therefore any brutal mutilation of a servant's body renders him free. The fifth rule is, where the generalities are stated and then the particulars are specified, only those particulars should be included, and no others; but where the particular items precede the general statement, everything belonging to the general is included, and the particular things mentioned are taken only as illustrations of the larger group, as when it is said (Exodus 22 : 10), "If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep," the law refers to any animal, because the general term "any beast" follows the mention of particular ones. The sixth rule is, to make an analogy of one entire passage with another entire passage; this operates in a manner similar to the second rule. The seventh rule is, to derive the explanation of a word or passage from its context, from its connection with what follows or precedes.

These hermeneutic rules, with certain later supplementation and modification, formed the basis for the enactment of new laws derived from the Bible. It may be that external circumstances necessitated the new laws and that the Scriptural passages were resorted to only for support, or to convince the Sadducees that these orally developed laws have their authority in the Written Law. Certainly a good proportion of the inductions and deductions and analogies must have been intended, or at least understood, in the Biblical passages.

There was something attractive about Hillel, beyond his scholarship. His modesty, his patience, his humor, his joy of living, his sympathy and understanding, these popular qualities attracted to him the people of his day. They rallied about him. He was their teacher and friend, as he likewise became the teacher and friend of succeeding generations of Jews. It must be understood clearly, however, that Hillel was never apotheosized. The man was never worshipped.

The Jew would worship only God, not man. Hillel was not worshipped, but his qualities and teachings served as examples for emulation.

Nearly every one of his qualities carries a telling illustration, which tradition has handed on. It is said (Talmud : Shabbat 31a) that when a heathen challenged Hillel to teach him all of the Jewish religion during the few moments the former could balance himself on one leg, Hillel calmly replied : "Do not unto others what is hateful to thyself : this is the whole of the Torah : all the rest is commentary : go and learn it." Another important statement attributed to Hillel (Abot 1 : 14) is : "If I am not for myself, who will be ? If only for myself, what am I ? If not now, when ?" Such attitudes to life which Hillel brought home to his people enabled them to live through the trying years which were coming, not only to live through them but to develop a code of living sufficient for the needs of Jews for centuries.

#### 5. THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOUR !

AFTER a very unhappy end to Herod's reign the Judean Kingdom was divided amongst his sons, not without some fighting and loss of life. Antipas was made Tetrarch of Galilee ; Philip was made Tetrarch of the Northeastern area ; Archelaus was made only Ethnarch, not a royal ruler, of Judea and the associated territory. Even as Ethnarch, Archelaus did not last long : ten years later, in 6 C.E., he was deposed. From that date Judea was governed by the Roman Procurators, who resided in Cæsarea. Only on special occasions, as during the Festival pilgrimages to the Temple, did the Procurators come to Jerusalem, and on these occasions they made their headquarters at Herod's palace.

Given a tolerant Procurator, the Jews managed their religious life quite happily. The Sanhedrin, in fact, now enjoyed greater powers than under Herod ; it acted as the representative of the people, responsible to the ruling power. While there is no exact record of how the members of the Sanhedrin were elected or how it was made up, it probably

consisted of seventy members: priests, scribes, elders—Saducees together with Pharisees—and a president, usually the high priest. Provincial Sanhedrins, consisting of only twenty-three members, adjudicated local affairs between Jews, the more important cases being taken to the large Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.

Not all the Procurators were tactful or considerate of the Jews' feelings, an evil which exists in every protectorate. At the outset, a Roman census of the Jews deeply humiliated a group of the Pharisees who, all along from the earliest days of Herod, had resented the gratuitous interference of Rome; they strained to break free from the strangle-hold of Rome. They knew full well that a new census meant new taxes and heavier subjugation. Zealous they were for freedom and Zealots they were called. Militant Pharisees, these. They were young, energetic, perhaps denounced as radicals and extremists, but enthusiastic Jews to whom life meant liberty. Willingly would they die to clear foreign oppression out of the country. Their heroes in the nation's past were the fearless warriors for God. And their hope was for such a hero to arise in their day. A Messiah they wanted. A Messiah for Israel, a Jewish King of the Jews, to lead them to battle, for freedom.

Another group of Pharisees was no less eagerly awaiting a redeemer, a Messiah. They too were extremist Pharisees, known as Essenes. But the Messiah they expected and hoped for was altogether different. Not as a warrior would he come, nor would his work be accomplished by rebellious instigation. Man could do very little to hasten his coming. God would bring salvation in his own good time. Everything is in God's hands. Everything is fated. Man has no control over destiny. God provides; unconditional providence prevails. All feeble man can do is to live a life of utter holiness, to carry piety to the extreme, then perhaps God will have mercy.

This extreme emphasis on piety connects the Essenes with certain aspects of the Pious or Hasidim of an earlier day. To achieve the goal of absolute holiness, the Essenes banded

together in the villages and towns of Palestine, but mostly in the wilderness where they would be undisturbed. Membership was strictly limited. There was first one year of probation before acceptance, and then there were two further years of probation before becoming a full-fledged member, when a severe vow was taken to disclose no secrets of the group, not even the names of the angels — but to fellow-members of the group everything should be revealed: other than this, no further oath may be taken. It is recorded that at one time there were four thousand Essenes all told, a very small number indeed. The organization was based on an exaggeration of Pharisaic elements of holiness, their aim being to establish a small priestly kingdom. Many priests appear to have accompanied the Essenes, to care for the table in the same meticulous manner they were accustomed to care for the altar in the Sanctuary; for them the common meal was a sacrament. Although the Essenes lived in separate homes, they did not own them: dwellings were communal property. All property was communally owned, clothes and tools and food too. Assistance, for example, could not be given to an impoverished non-Essene relative without the consent of the group. Everyone was equal and everyone worked, mostly at agriculture — trade or business was thought too wicked. Handicrafts were permitted, providing they did not include the making of war materials — warfare they uncompromisingly outlawed. The opposition to bloodshed extended to a refusal to send animals for the Temple sacrifices.

“Pacifist Communists” might be a good name for the Essenes. They sought to establish a Utopia on the basis of an applied moral philosophy: virtuous conduct and love of humanity were the foundations of their piety. Communities founded on these principles were to be found scattered in the inaccessible hideouts of the Holy Land. But could the Utopia survive open contact with the world, or was it a hothouse product? History provides the answer. In the later upheaval which shook Palestine, the Essenes suffered their share . . . and then disappeared.

During the life of the Essenes, the daily routine started at



sunrise with prayer, then work, then a communal bath, then a communal meal, religious conversation the only relish allowed, then back to work, with the evening meal, preceded by proper cleansing, to conclude the day. Great strictness attached to the observance of the Sabbath, even to restricting the natural functions of the body. Ritual purity was the primary aim. Even as Moses—the most venerated name for the Essenes—had separated himself from his wife and family for his holiest experience of receiving the Torah from God, so the Essenes made a virtue of celibacy. One Roman writer of antiquity marvelled how these celibates were able to keep going for generations. The truth is that they were not all celibates, that many of the Essenes joined the order in their later years, separating themselves from their wives and children; also, that the Essene community had adopted children into the group.

The esoteric lore in possession of the semi-monastic brotherhood was based on allegorical interpretations of the Bible. These sacred writings the Essenes eagerly drank in, since they contained a clue to secret medicinal compounds and cures. More than that, they revealed the mystery of “hidden wisdom.” Summarized, the hidden “wisdom” taught that through piety and purity a vision is gained into the future—which is the supreme achievement in life. Escape comes to all at death: the soul survives, but not the body; from the captivity of the bodily prison the soul departs for its reward or punishment. But in this life, complete salvation can come only through the Messiah, and man can do practically nothing to hasten his arrival. Still, the Messiah will come!

Yet other groups of Pharisees were looking for salvation. They too looked for a supernatural saviour, but they calculated that he would come soon, that by repentance man had the power to hasten his coming. They saw no hope in the practical methods of the Zealots, nor in the Utopian mysticism of the Essenes. Their imagination was stirred by the apocalyptic writings which revealed the approaching end of all things. They visioned an other-worldly transformation of this world. They searched for a miraculous king and redeemer. He

would come soon. Was there a time when a Messiah was more needed? Like a cloud Rome had spread itself over Judea; dark days had come; the last rays of normal hope were shut out. Soon, soon he will come. A heaven-sent Messiah. The storm will break: the world as it is will come to an end. The clouds will disperse. The righteous will bask in the sunshine.

More than once the Messiah seemed to have come. An unusual man speaking unusual words would bring throngs to the wilderness, to behold the miracle. But invariably the miracle was snuffed out between the callous fingers of the Roman provincial government. One whom the officials had put to death was called John the Baptist. A strange man he was, wearing a mantle of camel's hair as that of Elijah, eating little and drinking little, hiding himself in recesses, bathing and baptizing fellow Jews at the Jordan symbolically to cleanse them of their sins, and proclaiming, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). By him, one called Jesus was baptized.

#### 6. DID HE COME?

JESUS the Jew—known in Hebrew as Joshua (Yeshu)—attracted acceptance as the Messiah. At first he was accepted by very few. But his followers grew to millions with the passing of centuries. Christ was the name given him, for "Christ," derived from Greek, means "the anointed," the Messiah. His devotees, Christians, in time branched off from Judaism, and Christianity began.

In view of the career Jesus has had in the western world, it is inevitable that a wide difference of opinion should have grown up regarding him, especially when it is estimated that only fifty days of his life are recorded. The range of attitudes runs the entire gamut from denying that Jesus ever lived to worshipping him as God. From the bottom to the top of the scale: attempts have been made to prove that Jesus was a myth; or, if he did live, that he was a trouble-maker; or better, an ethical teacher; still better, a rabbi; even greater,

a prophet ; indeed, the Greatest Prophet ; verily, a Man unique in the history of mankind ; most sublime of all, Son of God.

Each opinion proceeds from a definite approach. Scope is given for a variety of approaches by the fact that the original sources of information — the Gospels of the New Testament : Mark, Matthew and Luke (John is not regarded as primarily a source of historic information) — vary among themselves ; they do not give one continuous life story. And the variations become all the greater when these Books of the New Testament are subjected to the same criteria of historical criticism as have been applied to the Old Testament. Such analysis shows that the Gospels were not written as history but as religious documents by believers, for believers. They therefore contain, like Books of the Old Testament, much that is legendary and much of later insertion.

The outstanding facts of Jesus' life, as one derives them from the Gospels — particularly from that of Mark, the earliest, having been written about thirty years after Jesus' activity — connect Jesus with Nazareth, a town in Galilee, making him a Nazarene. Several years before the Common Era, Jesus was born, a Jew. Little is known of his childhood, other than that he was educated and brought up as a Jew. His life projected into prominence at the age of thirty and it reached its culmination three years later, or — according to another view — only a year and a half later. The conviction came to him that he was the promised Messiah. Perhaps it came during his experience of baptism, when John the Baptist announced : "The Kingdom of God is at hand." But there it was. It anchored itself deeply into his consciousness. It impelled him to forsake his occupation as carpenter, to declare the glad tidings, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1 : 15).

Like his fellow Pharisees, Jesus attended synagogue, where he read from the Books of the Prophets and preached his explanation, but at his teaching everyone was amazed. Not the Scriptures nor even God did he mention as his authority, but himself : "I say unto you" (Matthew 6 : 29 ; 26 : 64, etc.). Disciples gathered about Jesus, mostly simple folk, who knew not the Law. In keeping with his character as the Messiah,

his believers have recorded his performance of many miracles, although he is not reported to have performed any in his home town, Nazareth.

For some time Jesus kept as a secret, locked up in his heart, the conviction that he was the Messiah. Only when in dire straits, at Cæsarea Philippi, outside Judea, did he allow the secret to slip into speech. He asked his disciples what men said he was. Some said he was John the Baptist; others, that he was Elijah; others, that he was one of the prophets. Apparently not satisfied, Jesus asked what the disciples themselves had to say. Simon Peter replied: "Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8:29). (Christ, of course, means Messiah.) He confirmed the deep secret, but for the time being Jesus instructed his disciples not to breathe a word of it, for he planned to go to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover pilgrimage, there to reveal himself to the holiday crowds as the Messiah.

Five days before Passover he came to the entrance of Jerusalem, in a manner the Messiah was expected to come. His actions revealed his secret. He created an impression; crowds gathered. Many gave vocal and adulatory expression to their hope that the Messiah had arrived. Now Jesus had to fulfill his part. He created a sensation when he chased away the traders from the Temple approach and upset the tables of the money-changers and of the dove vendors. That enraged the priests. But many of the people were in agreement with the rather violently expressed objection. Jesus now had to make his stand clear. He was asked whether tribute should be paid to Cæsar. His reply, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21), was an equivocal reply and could mean many things. But to the Zealots, to those who thought they had found in Jesus a political leader who by force was going to throw off the yoke of Rome, it meant that Jesus was not the manner of Messiah they were expecting, and many of the people thereupon left Jesus.

Enough of a disturbance was created for officials to take matters into their hands. The Jewish officials were mostly Sadducees, leaders of the Sanhedrin, and the powers of the

Sanhedrin were, of course, powers restricted, having no jurisdiction over the death penalty which was in the sole control of Rome, the sovereign ruler. But the obligations of the Sanhedrin were grave; they were the group responsible to Rome for the keeping of the peace. At the slightest provocation, the Roman Procurator would enact punitive measures against the whole people. Pontius Pilate was the Procurator then, and he had become notorious among the Jews for his ruthlessness. During his unfortunate administration he had executed Galileans without the benefit of a trial; he had harassed the Samaritans; and he was ultimately withdrawn because of the numerous complaints sent to Rome. In such a case, what was to be done with one who claimed to be a Messiah? What sort of Messiah he meant to be did not much matter. Romans would not differentiate between a political and a spiritual Messiah. Jesus had all but caused a riot at the Temple; whatever he had to say, his actions could be judged those of a rebel. The priestly leaders, unless they did something, would be apprehended for not taking measures to check the danger.

One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot, whose attachment to his master had weakened, informed the authorities of Jesus' presence on the Mount of Olives and there Jesus was seized, though not without some resistance during which one of the police was wounded by a disciple. It seems that the Sadducee leaders of the Sanhedrin, being anxious immediately to turn their prisoner over to the Romans and thus avoid further complications, convened an informal session, in haste, that very night, to determine on what grounds Jesus would be charged. At this preliminary hearing, Jesus was asked, "Art thou the Messiah?" To this he replied (according to Mark 14: 62), "I am he." According to Matthew (26: 64) he answered, "Thou sayest." According to both versions, Jesus continued: "hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thereupon, the high priest tore his raiment, holding such a reply as tantamount to blasphemy. It was on this charge, as a would-be King of the Jews, that several of the priests

took Jesus to Pilate, Roman authority, the first thing in the morning. When Pilate asked him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied "Thou sayest" (Matthew 27: 11).

To the Roman Procurator, a King of the Jews meant a rebel against Roman sovereignty, to be punished by death. There were many different versions and expectations of the Messiah but the officials understood it only in the way it would affect them. With a distorted sense of humor the Roman soldiers teased Jesus as one who pretended to be King of the Jews and they put him to death by the favorite Roman device for rebels, the humiliating crucifixion, over which was posted in three languages the taunt: "King of the Jews."

To the great body of Jews, Jesus, a claimant to Messiahship, died for his claims as did many others who called themselves Messiah, before and after Jesus' day. Undoubtedly, numbers of the common people suffered deeply in their sympathy with Jesus: but what could they do? The priests did not represent them nor did they act in conformity with their desires. The priests themselves were but the tools of Rome; carefully had they to regard every step, every move, particularly during the Festival season when the greatly feared Roman Procurator made a personal appearance in Jerusalem.

#### 7. CHRISTIANITY CAME

A FEW weeks after Jesus died, his frightened and dispersed followers left their hiding places. At most, there were one hundred and twenty of them. Several came with the news that they had seen Jesus in a vision. On the basis of what they saw in the vision they found definite proof that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, resurrected. The apostles of this knowledge devoted their lives to plant in many fields the belief in Jesus as the risen Christ, the divine Christ, miraculously born and miraculously resurrected. These beliefs divided Christianity from Judaism. Jesus in life had been a Jew, one of their own. But Jesus as taught by the apostles — a Son of God — was for them a new creation, incompatible with the idea of One Spiritual God. Moreover,

what they taught of him as a Christ was for Jews incompatible with the results which the Messiah was to have achieved. Jews continued still to hope for the Messiah.

What Jesus himself taught was essentially Jewish. His method, the use of parables and pointed enigmatic and epigrammatic statements, simple and direct, had long been employed by his fellow Jews. The contents of his teaching can be paralleled in practically every instance with traditional Jewish teachings of his date. If there is a difference, it is largely one of emphasis. Certain statements which Jesus learned in the negative form he emphasized by giving them a positive turn. Hillel's instruction, for instance (Shabbat 31a) — "Do not unto others what is hateful to thyself" — Jesus turned to, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7 : 12). Some teachings he emphasized to a point which from the standpoint of Judaism might be considered an exaggeration : he seemed to separate religion from the workaday life of the community, to divorce it from practical affairs and the national well-being.

Certain of Jesus' teachings, as they are recorded, leave one in doubt ; one statement conflicts with another, or with his own activity. Like the Pharisees, he insisted on the observance of every detail of the Law ; yet he disparaged Sabbath observance, dietary laws, washing of hands, and he said, contrary to the Pharisees, "no man putteth new wine into old bottles" (Mark 2 : 22). Like the Pharisees, Jesus believed in a Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Day of Judgment, the resurrection ; but he departed from the Pharisees in his belittling of the scribes, his reliance on his own authority, and his claim to be the Messiah. Jesus' attacks on the Pharisees were sweeping generalizations based on individual instances ; yet he was a Pharisee. The Pharisaic leaders themselves found fault with many types of Pharisees, enumerating seven types, and approving of only one or two types, thus differentiating between the good and the bad but not denouncing all. His own teaching, "He that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9 : 40), Jesus counters with, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12 : 30). His advocacy, "Resist not

evil" (Matthew 5 : 39), he seems to ignore in the scene he creates in overthrowing the Temple traffickers. These few illustrations, and others that could be added, are really minor when compared to the innumerable instances that might be assembled to indicate how truly close the moral standards of Jesus are to those of Judaism.

Jesus' counsel to save the soul by a measure of abnegation with a touch of ascetism, his absorption in the Messiah with all the mysticism and eschatology attached to it, make a point of contact, in certain regards, between Jesus and the Essenes. Like the Essenes, too, he was opposed to the making of oaths.

Taken all in all, the teachings of Jesus are on a very high ethical plane. Those ethical teachings are the bond connecting Judaism with Christianity. In those teachings, as well as in the personality of Jesus, lies an important contribution of Judaism to world religion.

#### 8. JUDAISM CLOTHED IN ALEXANDRIAN PHILOSOPHY

Not many years after Jesus' death, the Jews were given further evidence of Rome's intention to rule with unbending determination. One episode occurred in Alexandria, Egypt. The Alexandrian Greeks, economic and literary competitors of the Jews, insisted that deity statues of the Roman Emperor, Caligula, be set up in synagogues, even as they had been forced by the Romans into all other places of worship. Naturally the Jewish population remonstrated, with much pain and indignity heaped upon them in consequence. This unfortunate episode led to the sending of a Jewish deputation to Rome (40 C.E.) under the leadership of aged Judaeus Philo, one of aristocratic birth. This, however, is not the rôle in which Philo gained historic fame.

Judaeus Philo primarily personifies Judaism as clothed in Alexandrian philosophy.

The Maccabean revolt did not have the same effect in Alexandria as it did in Palestine. Hellenism continued among the Egyptian Jews, although it did not prove nearly as endanger-



ing to Judaism after the Maccabean uprising as during the previous century. At the time of the Maccabean uprising in Judea, in fact, the Jews of Alexandria built a temple very similar to that of Jerusalem, though not as a rival. Numerous synagogues, too, sprang into existence to accommodate the Jews in Egypt, numbering a million in Philo's day. The Alexandrian translation of the Bible into Greek (the Septuagint) was entirely completed, even the later Books—some of the translation obviously apologetic in intent. A great deal of additional literature had grown up, likewise apologetic; that is, presenting Judaism in an acceptable light to non-Jews.

Some of the books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were written at this time. One of these, the Letter of Aristeas, was made to appear the work of a non-Jew who was convinced of the greatness of the Jewish religion: it describes the Jerusalem Temple, its priests and practices, the work of Bible translators; it emphasizes strict observance of the dietary laws, the washing of hands before a meal, the regular system of prayers, and the complete ceremonial of Jewish life; but it does not refer to immortality nor to resurrection; it insists upon only one living God, all others, the idolatrous gods, being only heroes of the past; it emphasizes the value of the Torah and its obligations, which make Israel separate from other people. Here we see a desire to attract the heathen world to Judaism. Another noteworthy propagandist book is that of the Sibylline Oracles. Sybil is the Greek term for soothsayer, and the soothsayer of these Oracles is reputed to be the daughter-in-law of Noah, who is represented as eloquently preaching Judaism and righteousness to the world.

Some of the Jewish sects of Palestine cast their glow over the Jewish life in Alexandria, although in Alexandria there was added the tinge of Greek philosophy. In a treatise on the Essenes and in another treatise "On the Contemplative Life," Philo depicts the Alexandrian version of the Essenes, called the Therapeutae because of their stress on spiritual healing. Members of this sect, which admitted women, gave up their property for the communal welfare; they believed in the ultimate separation of the soul from the body; they

sought secret doctrines through an allegorical interpretation of the Bible: all precisely as the Essenes in Palestine. Twice a day they prayed and the intervening hours they spent in contemplation, more than did the Essenes. In addition, they busied themselves composing all possible and impossible psalms. In the solitude of their individual retreats they lost themselves in the maze of philosophy and then on the Sabbath they assembled for a deep and careful exposition of their laws. This sort of individualistic retirement from the world of affairs was contrary to the main current of Judaism and it is therefore not surprising that the Therapeutae drifted from the course of Jewish life. Of "those who without discrimination shun all concern with the life of the state," Philo expressed disapproval.

Philo adopted and applied certain of the tendencies of his day to interpret the Bible allegorically, "manifest symbols of things invisible, and hints of things inexpressible." His literary work consists largely of homiletical essays, as the commentary on the Books of Moses. He wrote in Greek in a style modelled after the Greek philosophers, especially Plato. Yet he recognized the writings of Moses as an absolute revelation of God's truth and he held that all the teachings of the Greek philosophers had already been taught equally well, if not better, by Moses: the Greek thinkers, in fact, had derived from Moses many of their thoughts.

Philo's writings thus seem to have been aimed at those Jews who had become fascinated by the philosophical formulations of the Greeks and it was his intention to convince them that Judaism was equally a philosophy. At the same time he sought to attract to Judaism non-Jews who were searching for religion and truth, by showing Judaism to be a definitely philosophical type of religion. To achieve this aim, he sought for universalistic meaning in the particularistic passages in the Bible, also to explain away divine anthropomorphisms, and, in addition, to read into the Bible Greek ethics and cosmology. As a matter of fact, though, Philo's presentation of Judaism is not altogether philosophical, inasmuch as he resorts to an external source and authority for establishing truth, namely,

the Pentateuch — the absolute truth revealed by God to Moses — whereas philosophy accepts no supernatural revelation but depends upon logic and experience to yield the truth.

In characteristically Jewish fashion, Philo begins with God, the one reality, the beginning and the end. He insists that God cannot be described according to the qualities which we know, since that would make limited and finite what is really eternal and infinite. All we can say is that God has none of the limitations known to us: He is perfect. God is: that we can say; but not *what* He is. This abstraction of God, this complete perfection and transcendence, makes necessary some go-between to link the perfect God with the world of imperfection. Some mediator must make the contact between perfection and imperfection. Philo mentions Ideas or Forces which exist in God and operate upon the world. The separate Ideas or Forces are included in one supreme and general Idea or Force which Philo calls the Logos, by which he means the Reason of God, operating in the world. This is fairly clear and consistent. But Philo confuses us when he states further that these Ideas are demons or angels, separate beings, independent and apart from God, and that the Logos is an archangel, a first-born son of God, the Word of God mentioned in Genesis, through whom the world was created. Thus Philo shows the go-between Logos as immanent in God but also as standing apart, between God and the world. Therein lies Philo's original contribution. In arriving at it, he makes use of the Hebrew emphasis on the wisdom of God as well as of Plato's doctrine of Ideas of the world and of the Stoics' theory of the Reason of God working in the world. Out of lifeless and shapeless matter, the Logos and lesser Forces of God formed the world.

The same dualism applies to man. The body of senses captivates the pure divine soul. Irrational impulses and passions, stimulated by sensual pleasures, stifle human freedom and corrupt the pure soul, enslaving it to the lower emotions. Then, with the power of judgment lost and the finer aspirations paralyzed, material things gain supremacy over the spiritual.

That being the case, the wicked have no right to speak ; they should be subjugated and ruled by the virtuous who still retain their freedom.

Man's duty is to rise above the physical senses. The only way of gaining freedom is to ascend to the sphere of the spiritual, where the divine is reached. Alone, man is too weak to make the ascent — this is where Philo differs with the Stoics with whom his ethics otherwise agree — he must have God's help. God plants virtue in the heart of man. With God in his heart, man has nothing to fear, not even death : he "is more difficult to enslave than a lion." A virtuous man can never be compelled to do anything he does not intend to do, because the virtuous man is truly free. Philo appeals to the Bible for types of virtue. The ceremonial laws too, he points out, have spiritual meaning ; these laws of Moses, contrary to the ever-changing Greek laws, are unchangeable and they are applicable at all times for all peoples. Philo advocates the conquest over evil, not through ascetic austerities necessitating withdrawal from the world, but through a thorough knowledge of the world and a rational adjustment to it. At death, those who in their lifetime had remained enslaved to the physical senses, must return to physical life in another body ; those who in their lifetime had liberated themselves from the physical body will now become entirely released from the body of sense.

Philo's dualism as well as his theory of the Logos was taken by the subsequent history of Judaism as challenging to the strict idea of Monotheism, and therefore Philo's teachings came to be but a tributary of the main stream of Judaism. His doctrine of the Logos and of mediation played a much more important part in the development of Christianity. For Jews, the teachings of the Pharisaic scribes were more acceptable.

#### 9. JUDAISM SURVIVES THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF TEMPLE AND NATION

A DISTURBANCE similar to that which took Philo away from his literary pursuits to serve on a deputation to Rome created

considerable disorder in Palestine. Emperor Caligula violated all regard for the sensibilities of devotees of Judaism by ordering the erection of his image in the Jerusalem Temple, there to be worshipped. His Syrian governor tarried in the execution of this decree, a concession to the Jews which would have cost his life had not Caligula been murdered in Rome.

For a short span of a few years the Judeans enjoyed a respite from heathen harrying, when Agrippa I, of Herodian descent, was given control of the large territory which his grandfather, Herod, had held. His regard for the religious susceptibilities of the people, his observance of the Jewish requirements and his donations to the Temple, made him popular with the Pharisees. But Agrippa's all too early demise was followed with a reinstallation of foreign Roman Procurators to govern Judea — foreign in every sense, foreign in their sympathies, foreign in their misunderstanding of the Jew, foreign in their disrespect for Judaism, foreign in their very temperament. Each succeeding Procurator seems to have been worse than his predecessor.

Discontent reached the boiling point in the year 66 C.E., when Nero was emperor of Rome. A large section of the Jews, the prominent priestly families, the Pharisaic leaders and the Herodian regal relics, sought to maintain peace at all costs. But the scething rage of the Zealots would not be cooled. The Nazarenes, disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, hurried out of Jerusalem, to settle at safe points beyond the Jordan. The Zealots drove the priestly and Pharisaic pacifists out of Jerusalem. They won adherents to their cause. In Jerusalem the Zealot leader became dictator. Two others later joined him to form a three-headed dictatorship. The inevitable internal conflict and resultant anarchy followed. Even so, the all-powerful Roman army found it no easy task to extinguish the last spark of Judean independence. This was a prolonged fight to the death. Valor equal to that of the Maccabees was displayed by the Zealots; but this time the odds were too great.

On the fatal ninth day of Ab the Temple was burned;

only one wall escaped destruction, and that has remained to this day a mournful reminder of the national disaster. The activities of the Alexandrian (Egypt) temple were also put to an end. The Sanhedrin, supreme administrative body of Jewry, was dispersed. Victorious Titus, son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, crucified the insurgents, forced youths to work in mines, sold women and children into slavery, brought seven hundred of the strongest and handsomest men to march in the triumphal procession in Rome and to fight animals in the arena, and paraded the seized vessels of the Temple, which were later reproduced on the triumphal arch still to be seen in Rome.

Although more than one million Jews are estimated to have perished during the years of revolt, Judea remained fairly well populated. But Jerusalem was no longer the city of importance. Shortly before its destruction, a pacifist teacher of first rank, Johanan ben Zakkai, managed to escape from the city and obtain Roman permission to establish a school in Jamnia, a town not touched by the ravages of battle. Rome granted this permission, possibly on the assumption that eyes glued to study would not look about for trouble. But this innocent move meant the salvation of Judaism. The life of the weakened nation was crushed under the heel of Rome, true, yet the religion remained ; more than that, Judaism arose from the debris of Judea to bring new life to the broken people, religion replacing the state as the focus of devotion and zeal, supplying both the reason and the means for remaining a Jew even in Galut (exile).

In the school at Jamnia and in other schools which sprang to life it was the Judaism of the Pharisees that flourished. The Essenes the catastrophe reduced to a sad remnant. The Sadducees—the aristocrats having been killed or carried away captive and the priests having been bereft of the Temple—dwindled to a mere sect. The Pharisees emerged triumphant. They had a program of reconstruction. The Temple had for them long lost its exclusive importance ; the synagogues and schools of study which were already replacing it now pro-

jected into full prominence. When news of the destruction of the Temple was brought to Johanan ben Zakkai, he quoted Hosea's statement, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6), in support of his consolation that there now remained something greater than sacrifices—loving-kindness. Pharisaism had already made Judaism a progressive unit, which no one calamity could disintegrate. It had given to the religion the power to endure, which is as important as the power to grow.

How did Pharisaic Judaism acquire the vitality to live on?

First we must take into account the unbroken chain of tradition (Shalsholet Cabala). Each generation produced spiritual leaders who recognized their serious obligation in three directions: first, to conserve the heritage of the past; second, to adjust the heritage to the needs of their own generation; third, to follow in the paths of the teachers who preceded them, remembering that a chain is as strong as its weakest link.

In the continuous procession of scholarly trustees of Judaism, tradition connects Hillel and Shammai, the last of "The Pairs," to Johanan ben Zakkai, a disciple of the Hillel school. The disciples of Hillel and Shammai were given the title Rabbi, which means "teacher." The teachers of this segment of the traditional chain are referred to as Tannaim, the Aramaic word (then the spoken language) for the "teachers." As head of his school, Johanan ben Zakkai was called Rabbon. He made it the primary function of the school to collect the various laws which oral tradition had developed, and to reconcile the differences of opinion which had arisen between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. His own sympathies were naturally with those of Hillel, and largely through his efforts the Hillelites gained the upper hand in the interpretation of Judaism.

A second outstanding achievement of Johanan ben Zakkai in the reorganization of Judaism was the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin at Jamnia. Here it was called the Great Bet Din, or the High Court. In activity as well as in name it differed

from its predecessor. No longer was it under the leadership of the high priest and the aristocratic Sadducees; no longer was it empowered with political responsibilities, no longer did it focus its attention on political and priestly matters. The Bet Din was completely Pharisaic. Its main duty now became that of authoritatively regulating the religious life according to the new conditions, without the Temple and Temple-worship, and with little precedent on which to act. The High Court likewise undertook civil jurisdiction, within the limits allowed by Rome; it imposed fines and other penalties, but not capital punishment. The Bet Din sought to make its decisions obligatory upon all Jews, even beyond the borders of Palestine. To maintain the authoritative nature of this group, Johanan ordained his disciples as rabbis, and that institution of ordination continued throughout the centuries.

The High Court of scholars also fixed the calendar, based on human observation, to establish the exact dates for the Festivals and fasts. In Babylonia and the other locales of Jewish residence outside Palestine, where news of the proper date for the Festivals had to be communicated by messenger or signal, the delay in the receipt of the announcement necessitated the observance of two days for each Festival, to make sure that the proper day was included. That necessity, incidentally, of keeping two days for the Festivals no longer existed when exact calendars could be scientifically calculated and the dates fixed for any number of years ahead. Nevertheless, once the custom was established it remained, so that to this very day Orthodox and Conservative Jews in non-Palestinian countries retain the two days for the initial and concluding observance of the three Festivals—Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles—and for the New Year's Day of Memorial.

Before his death, Johanan ben Zakkai withdrew from the presidency of the Bet Din—called Patriarch (Nasi)—in favor of Gamaliel II, because of the latter's descent from the beloved Hillel. It became Gamaliel's objective to preserve the unity of the traditional law by ending the conflict between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai.



He sought to do this "not for his own honor, nor for the honor of his school, but solely for the honor of God, that divisions should not multiply in Israel" (Talmud: Baba Mezia 59 b). Actually the victory went to the progressive tendencies of Hillel, whom Johanan had already favored, so that several of the irreconcilable Shammites continued to hold out, but that did not hinder the important step towards arriving at a unified Judaism. It was decided that in a conflict of opinions the out-voted minority opinions should be presented in the names of those who hold them, thus to avoid a rift by showing them to be only individual differences of opinion.

His attempt to maintain a unity and an unquestioned authority as patriarch made Gamaliel II rather severe with his colleagues and students. The harshness of his severity led to a revolt amongst his scholars who agreed to depose him and to put Eleazar ben Azariah in his place, and they did precisely that. In the session which followed the deposition, the erstwhile repressed scholars made highly significant decisions, which were collected in one special Tractate: it was determined, for instance, what should be definitely included as belonging to holy Scripture, and what should be excluded — among others, the Book of Ben Sira, which had been hanging in the balance, was excluded. After a few weeks of freedom the scholars repented their hasty action and reinstated Gamaliel II. As a compromise plan, Gamaliel was to preach three times a month, and Eleazar the fourth time, in accordance with the custom for the patriarch to address the people weekly through a Meturgaman, a "public orator."

Toward further consolidating the religion, Rabbon Gamaliel arranged the form of divine worship in a manner which became standardized. He modelled the liturgy in the pattern of the worship of the destroyed Temple and yet revised it to conform with the new state of affairs, to include a petition for a restoration of the Temple worship, of Jerusalem and of the kingdom. The prayer in which these petitions were included, called the Shemoneh-esreh ("eighteen") be-

cause of its eighteen benedictions, became the principal prayer for synagogue worship; to the seventeen pre-existing benedictions he added one directed against informers to the Roman authorities—the introduction of which is readily understood in the light of the tyranny which plagued the people! Leading up to the principal prayer, the Shemoneh-esreh, was the declaration of faith, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One” (Dt. 6: 4), accompanied by an expression of thankfulness for the gift of the night’s rest (in the evening prayer), or for the day’s light (in the morning prayer), for God’s choice of Israel, for the redemption He has brought and that which He will still bring.

The conduct of the divine Service, in accordance with the Pharisaic ideal, was altogether democratic. Any layman who could do so with sufficient dignity was entitled to lead in prayer. On special occasions, of course, the honor was accorded to men of high repute. On market days, Mondays and Thursdays, short selections were read from the Pentateuch which was inscribed on a scroll of parchment and deposited in an Ark. There was a lengthier Pentateuch-reading (Sidra) on the Sabbath and Festival days, with an additional selection (Haftarah) from the Prophetic Books, and an expository translation in the Aramaic language which was then spoken and understood by the people.

Normal Judaism was now coming into its own. Between the years 80 to 140 C.E., Judaism was assuming a fixed form which became the established framework for subsequent filling in. The unwritten Law called the Halakah, “the rule to go by,” was being definitely formulated in the schools, and to this end the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the later Writings were intensely studied, discussed, interpreted. With all efforts bent to achieve unity and uniformity in worship, in the understanding of the Bible, in ceremonial observances and in the application of religion to life, it now became certain that the Jewish religion would survive the collapse of the Jewish nation, that it would survive any contingency, for these are factors which solidify a religion and give it the stamina to endure.

## 10. RABBI AKIBA AND THE TRAGIC BAR KOKEBA REVOLT

IN the generation after Gamaliel II there were two outstanding scholars. One of them, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, the son of a high priest, had been taken prisoner to Rome when Jerusalem was destroyed. His great contribution in the interpretation of Scripture was the modification and also simplification of Hillel's seven rules of hermeneutics. These he arranged into thirteen rules, and he made an improvement in not insisting on the strictness of legal deduction. As corrected by him, these rules became the accepted method of study.

The other great scholar of that generation, and an opponent of Rabbi Ishmael with regard to method, was Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph. His life reads like a novel. An ignorant shepherd, he fell madly in love with his employer's daughter and married her. The displeased father-in-law thereat disinherited his daughter. But love will find a way. It impelled middle-aged Akiba to attend elementary school together with his young son and there to learn the Hebrew ABC. That being insufficient, Akiba absented himself for a number of years of study, not to return until he had made himself a great scholar. Loyally his splendid wife slaved away to provide sustenance. Such sacrifices merited for Akiba a glorious career. Glorious it was; tradition narrates that from ten to twenty thousand counted themselves amongst his disciples. Akiba was then happily reunited with his wife and, needless to add, his father-in-law gladly received him.

Akiba's principle in interpreting the Bible rests upon the assumption that nothing is accidental or superficial in a revelation which is divine. Even the slightest peculiarity of spelling or idiom has a special meaning. Ingeniously Akiba was able to attach to the Written Law those Jewish traditions which had heretofore remained unrelated to Scripture. The idiomatic designation of the accusative case in the grammatic construction of a Hebrew sentence Akiba interpreted as meaning "with." This method can do almost anything with the eccentricities of the text and can carry distinctions to the

point of splitting hairs. Ishmael, in opposition, insisted that the Torah speaks as men would speak, employing a multiplicity of idiomatic expressions and spellings, involving no secret connotations; and his commonsense principles were therefore given ultimate preference.

In the shaping of the Oral Law, Akiba made his lasting contribution in his arrangement of the material into a systematized form in which the subjects were divided into six main groupings, with appropriate sub-groupings. This codification simplified the study of the rapidly growing mass of material and at the same time did much to preserve the accuracy of the oral perpetuation of the Law.

The personality of Akiba, perhaps more than all else, left its impress on Judaism. An instance is recorded that his wealthy friend, Rabbi Tarphon, once gave him a large sum of money to invest in his behalf; when questioned, sometime afterwards, as to what had been done with the money, Akiba replied that he had distributed it amongst poor students; and to the challenge, "Is this the way to deal with money entrusted to you?" Akiba rejoined, "You wanted an investment — what better investment could you have?"

Akiba's romantic life ends unhappily, for he became enmeshed in the final Jewish struggle for release from Rome, and for that he met the death of a martyr.

This was the chain of events. The annihilation of the Second Temple sixty years previously had not crushed all hope for a restoration of the Temple. True, the tax of half-a-shekel which had formerly been paid for the support of the Temple was now imposed by Rome as a *Fiscus Judaicus*, a tax for the privilege of being a Jew, and then ironically devoted to the temple of Jupiter. So long, however, as the Temple remained undisturbed in its ruins there was always the chance that it would be rebuilt at an opportune time, as in the case of the First Temple. But when the Roman Emperor Hadrian commanded that over the remains of the Temple should be erected a shrine for Jupiter Capitolinus the Jews despaired. Once devoted to foreign worship, it would be difficult to reclaim the sacred area.

In 132 C.E. revolt broke out; it lasted three and a half years. Akiba took a lead. He actively supported in battle one whom he believed to be the Messiah, the "Star out of Jacob"—Bar Kokeba (known also by the name, Simon bar Koziba)—of whom Balaam had prophesied in Scripture (Numbers 24:17). Not all the scholars shared Akiba's faith in Bar Kokeba; one put it rather tersely to him, "Akiba, grass will be growing over your face long before the Messiah comes." As an act of precaution, the High Court moved from Jamnia to Usha, a town in Galilee, away from the scene of strife. Despite all their secret preparations, and despite the high pitch of enthusiasm over the coming redemption of Israel, despite even a good measure of initial success in warfare, the Jews lost. They lost heavily. But so did the Romans: they boasted of no glorious success when they returned to their home-folk. For the Jews, however, the loss was more than a military defeat equal to that which they had suffered some sixty-five years previously. On this occasion, it was a Messiah who failed.

With a vengeance, Hadrian hastened to erect the promised temple to Jupiter over the ruins of the Jewish Temple. Jerusalem he rebuilt and renamed, in honor of himself, Aelia Capitolina. Into this heathen city no Jews were allowed to enter, under penalty of death; only once a year—on the tragic ninth day of Ab—were they permitted to weep their lamentations at the remains of the Temple, and yet so attached were they to this hallowed spot that gladly would they bribe the Roman soldiers for the privilege of prolonging the shedding of their tears by the "Wailing Wall."

Determined to uproot Judaism, Hadrian enacted laws forbidding circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath and equally significant phases of the religion, and the performance of weddings according to the Jewish ritual. This amounted to tearing out the vitals of the religion. Of course, Hadrian could not have his wish. Judaism had already proved its mettle in former crises. What was not allowed openly was carried on secretly. In the case of a Jewish wedding, for example, a candle placed in the window conveyed the secret

information, a sort of invitation, to the friends and relatives. Especially severe was Hadrian in enforcing the law which forbade the teaching of the Torah and the continuation of ordination, but how could he succeed when the study of the Law meant more to the scholars than life itself? Tradition records that the ten outstanding scholars of that time died in disobedience to Hadrian's command. Akiba was one of them. With his last breath he recited: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." All his days he had served God with all his might and all his possessions and now he was privileged to serve God with his life.

#### 11. PROSELYTES AND CONVERTS

A FURTHER result of the Bar Kokeba revolt was the definite separation of the Nazarenes, as the early Christians were called, from Judaism.

For several decades after Jesus' death his followers were conforming Jews, attending the synagogue or Temple, observing the Jewish laws and ceremonies; they differed from their fellow Jews only in that they believed Jesus to have been the promised Messiah who, though ordered to death as a likely rebel by Pontius Pilate, had returned to life and then ascended to heaven whence he would again visit this earth for the final judgment and for the redemption of those who believed in him.

But Paul came upon the scene. He was zealous to spread Christianity, especially among the heathens. Seeing that the Jewish observances, particularly circumcision, retarded the acceptance of Christianity, he forthwith discarded many of them. Paul taught that faith was sufficient to make one a good Christian, also that Jesus was the Son of God. These two doctrines attracted to him large numbers of heathen converts. The inconvenience of circumcision was no longer a deterrent. The belief in a Son of God was not an obstacle (as it was to most Jews) to gentiles who had been worshipping a multiplicity of gods. Whereas in the beginning, under the leadership of Peter, the Judean Christians were in the

majority, the heathen Christians gained supremacy in the second century.

During these early years of Christianity many sects arose among the Judean Christians. The Ophites, also called Naasites, held that all sin and evil originated from the serpent; in their books and pamphlets they made considerable reference to the Bible story of the serpent. Another sect, the Gnostics—derived from the Greek word “gnosis” which means knowledge—claimed especial knowledge of God, the knowledge that God is pure and entirely removed from the world; that He sent an angel to create the world, a task the angel could not accomplish as well as God Himself could have done, and that therefore a certain amount of evil attaches to the world.

Because of the vagaries of such excessive philosophizing the rabbis were opposed to absorption in cosmogony and esoterics. Of the four scholars who indulged in Gnostic studies, the rabbis moralized, Elisha ben Abuyah forsook Judaism, openly desecrating the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement, and acted as a miserable informer against the Jews; ben Zoma went insane; ben Azai met an early death; and only Akiba escaped the danger.

A few years after the destruction of the Temple, quite a number of heathens came over to Judaism as proselytes. Judaism was never a missionary religion in the sense that missionaries are sent out into the heathen world with the expressed purpose of converting unbelievers. It was indirectly that Judaism attracted proselyte devotees. The drama of history had scattered the Children of Israel far and wide, into communities large and small, had integrated them into the life and labors of their adopted homelands, had made them neighbors. The synagogues which they built in their places of residence were therefore certain to attract the interest, or curiosity at least, of those amongst whom they lived. As neighbors, they welcomed this interest and the resultant attendance at synagogue Services. Moreover, did not Judaism plan and pray for the coming of the day when “the Lord shall be King over all the earth” (Zech. 14: 9), the day when

God's house "shall be a house of prayer for all peoples?" (Isaiah 56: 7).

So the story of Judaism relates how in the first and second centuries of the Common Era, and in the century or two preceding, the synagogues in the cities of the Mediterranean area were crowded with non-Jewish visitors who soon formed the habit of regular attendance. Rejecting idolatry for the God of Israel whom they learned to revere and worship, they were deemed truly religious persons and, by liberal interpretation, part of the Jewish group. Strictly, though, complete adoption within Judaism required, in addition, the rite of male circumcision, immersion in water, and a Temple offering. With the destruction of the Temple, circumcision constituted the essential initiatory rite. Consider then what a blow to proselytization was Emperor Hadrian's edict ruling circumcision a crime punishable by death. True, Antoninus Pius relaxed the law to the extent of allowing Jewish parents to mark their own sons with the surgical sign of the Covenant. But for others it was still illegal, and that acted as a great deterrent for would-be proselytes. Along came Christianity with the teaching that this rite—as well as others of about equal discomfort—was unnecessary. In other respects, in moral philosophy and ethical practice, there was a great similarity between Judaism and Christianity and therefore a great accession of converts was diverted from the former to the latter faith.

The final blow to proselytism in Judaism came under the later Roman emperors, the Christian emperors, who—as George Foot Moore summarizes in "Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era" (Vol. I, pp. 352-353) \*—"made conversion of Christians to Judaism a crime in itself, with increasingly severe penalties both for the Christian convert and the Jew who converted him. The net of the law is spread wide; it takes in adherence to Judaism and its teachings, frequenting the synagogue, and calling oneself a Jew; thus

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including not only male proselytes who were also liable to the laws prohibiting circumcision, but to women proselytes in the strict sense, and to the looser adherents of Judaism. The penalty was at first arbitrary with the magistrates; then the law added confiscation of property and the inability to make a will. For the proselyte-maker the legislation went on to equate the crime to *laesa maiestas*, and finally made it simply capital, whether the convert was a freeman or slave."

In earlier and happier days, before the grip of Rome had tightened, many Romans, some of prominent station—even a relative of Titus, it is said—came over to Judaism. One of considerable culture, Aquila, passed through Christianity to Judaism. In view of his Greek learning, the rabbis persuaded him to translate the Bible into Greek, since the Septuagint translation had been appropriated by the Christians and much not found in the authorized Hebrew Bible had been added. Aquila's translation, apart from an exaggerated attention to jots and tittles, arising out of Akiba's influence, does give a carefully exact, literal translation. A large part of this masterpiece has been lost during the ages: through some confusion an Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, used by the Babylonian Jews, made in the second century C.E. by an unknown scholar, was thought to be Aquila's translation, and came to be known as Targum Onkelos (Aramaic for Akylas).

The defeat by Hadrian, as was seen, practically brought to an end this faint flush of proselytism. If anything, half-hearted Jews assimilated with neighboring populations. The Christians, with Jesus as their Messiah, had naturally refrained from joining the revolt led by the pretended Messiah, Bar Kokeba, and that was another reason why they were in a position to profit numerically by the Jewish defeat. Christianity, as evangelized by Paul, disregarding elements of the Written as also of the Oral Law, reached in among the Greek-speaking Jews and through them to the Greek-speaking non-Jews, and converted them.

Then the cleavage between Christianity and Judaism became complete.

## 12. AFTER DEFEAT, CONSOLIDATION

AFTER Hadrian's death the harsh restrictions on Judaism were partially removed. The study of the Torah was permitted again in the open. The distressing experience under Hadrian, especially the latter's attempt to put a finish to Judaism by prohibiting the Torah study had a tonic effect on the evolution of traditional Judaism: it emphasized the necessity of solidifying a nebulous mass of teachings which might otherwise be blown away in a future political gale. That there be no discontinuance in the progressive formulation of the Oral Law, a menace now to be faced, the dispersed scholars reassembled in Usha, in the north, away from the center of disturbance. At this session, arrangements were made for the reconstruction of the elementary-school system; a limit of one fifth of one's income was set as a maximum sum for donations to charity; and, very important, it was decided that no matter how stubbornly scholars differed in their opinions, they should not be excommunicated.

Simeon, son of Gamaliel II, inherited the office of patriarch. Second in rank to the patriarch (Nasi) was the Ab Bet Din, Nathan the Babylonian holding the position at this time; the third post was that of Hakam, filled by Rabbi Meir. Although not a great scholar, Simeon the Patriarch sensed the requirements of the post-Hadrian days of reconstruction. He would not burden Jews with fresh enactments too onerous to fulfill. He advocated adherence to the customs then in force in each locality. Simeon displayed a broad spirit by insisting on the obligation of ransoming not only freemen but even slaves who had been taken captive. His principle that documents attested to by non-Jews and executed in a non-Jewish court be held valid, is evidence of his impartiality as well as of his understanding of the practical conditions of his day.

Various schools of higher learning made their appearance, mainly in Galilee, in the vicinity of Sepphoris and later at Tiberias. Each scholar who headed the school made it his task to recover without any loss all that had been accom-

plished in the growth of the religion, prior to the Hadrian interruption.

This work was pursued in two directions. One was to follow the order of the Pentateuch, word for word, verse for verse, and to investigate each passage for its deeper meaning. This method of interpreting the letter came to be designated as Midrash—a name derived from the Hebrew word meaning “to search,” “to investigate.” When the examination of the text gave status to a law, when it connected an unwritten law with the written text, the form of investigation constituted Midrash Halakah, or legal Midrash; when the examination of the text yielded a non-legal, a devotional or purely sermonic teaching, it was Midrash Haggadah: legalistically only the Midrash Halakah was important and binding.

The other direction in which the traditional studies were pursued was, not to follow the order of the Pentateuch in search of an interpretation for each verse, but to arrange the rules and regulations of the unwritten Law and to formulate them according to subject matter: this is known as the Mishnah.

In the legal development, it is uncertain which method was the older. Both were studiously pursued. The school would have its own Midrash Halakah and its own Mishnah. Where the traditions contained a conflict of opinion or fact, the principal of the school made the decision or simply gave all opinions to which he added his own. Which school was to have its own Midrash Halakah and Mishnah gain authoritative acceptance only time could tell.

Nearly all the eminent scholars of the generation were disciples of Akiba. Simeon ben Yohai stands out for his independent judgment. Little of his original contributions are recorded, but what remains is of excellent quality. Above all, Simeon ben Yohai was a rationalist. Yet—history is queer—he has gone down in history as a mystic, the author of the essential book of medieval Jewish mysticism: the Zohar. The origin of this error is traceable to the story which tradition tells of him, that when one rabbi spoke favorably of Roman civic improvements in Palestine, Simeon

ben Yohai criticized that whatever they did was for their own benefit—they built bridges in order to collect toll and they built roads in order to profit by them, etc.—and that when this comment was reported to Roman headquarters, Simeon, to avoid the death penalty, escaped to a cave where he lived in seclusion for thirteen years, until the insulted emperor had died; during these thirteen years of hiding he had the time and solitude for deep reflection, and for that reason was erroneously regarded as having then composed the mystic literature.

Rabbi Eleazar ben Jose, the Galilean, gained fame as a preacher and homilist. Although he is not unmentioned in the development of the Law, he is very important in the homiletic history of Judaism, being the author of thirty-two rules for the sermonic interpretation of the Bible, the Midrash Haggadah.

A very popular and eloquent speaker, and a wise one too, of this age was Judah ben Ilai. Altogether, approximately three thousand statements of his are recorded. His saying (Abot de-Rabbi Nathan 28): "This Torah is comparable to two roads, one of fire and one of ice—if you walk in one you will burn, in the other you will freeze—what is there to do but walk in the middle," characterizes well his own nature, one which sought the happy medium. With good sense, he shunned excessive absorption in study to the exclusion of all else. The opportunity of cheering a wedding with his presence or the necessity of extending condolences was sufficient to take him away from the *milieu* of erudition.

Not only popular as a lecturer—with three hundred fables to his credit—but also the most brilliant scholar of this generation was a colleague, Rabbi Meir. He was a scribe by profession, so expert that he is said to have written from memory the entire Book of Esther to provide the needs for a particular community which he was visiting at Purim time and which lacked a copy necessary for the festival worship. Meir's devotion to study is reflected in the report that of the meagre three shekels a week he earned he spent two to maintain himself and his family, and the third shekel to support

poor students. His wife Beruriah was herself an accomplished scholar and came to his aid on several occasions.

Rabbi Meir was especially qualified to continue the codification of the Oral Law, which Akiba had set in motion. Trained not only by Akiba but also by Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Meir was able to steer a clear course between the fanciful translations of the former and the latter's strict rules of hermeneutics. To broaden his own outlook, Meir did not hesitate to learn from the heretic, Elisha ben Abuyah, assimilating the worthwhile, which he calls "the pomegranate," and discarding the worthless, which he calls "the rind." His saying, "Look not at the bottle but at its contents" (Abot 4:27), typifies Rabbi Meir's outlook. Many a discussion did he carry on with a non-Jewish Galilean philosopher, probably the cynic Oinomaos of Gadara. The gifts of intellect are universal. How fully Meir appreciated that, we can tell by his unprejudiced contacts and also by his assertion that although there be a special relation between God and Israel, nevertheless a gentile who is a student of the Torah is on a level with the high priest. Because of his diversified background and friendships Rabbi Meir achieved skill in dialectics. He was able to argue both sides of a question so skilfully that his audiences were frequently left in doubt as to which side he would adopt in his conclusion. Worse, sometimes to confound them with his brilliance, he would argue the wrong side of the case. His disciples, therefore, to be on the safe side, hesitated to accept any of his decisions!

In the generation which followed, Rabbi Meir's formulation of the Oral Law according to subject matter (his *Mishnah*)—developed on the basis of what he had carried over from Rabbi Akiba—was given preference over the *Mishnahs* of his contemporaries, and in the hands of Rabbi Judah the Nasi, it became the authoritative codification of the Oral Law, *the Mishnah*. Hence it is said (Talmud: Sanhedrin 86a) that "in the *Mishnah* when no authority is specifically named it is understood to be Rabbi Meir." The *Mishnah* ("teaching") of each of the other schools diminished in importance. By the selective process of several gen-

erations, the fittest — the instruction of those schools with the deepest religious insight and the truest religious understanding — survived.

### 13. THE RESULT: THE MISHNAH AND THE MIDRASH

JUDAH the Patriarch was supremely gifted for the important final arrangement of the accepted Mishnah. A son of Simeon ben Gamaliel, he inherited the office of patriarch, which made him head of the High Court and also the recognized representative of the Jews to the Roman government. Having studied under his father, then under a private tutor, then in the schools of Rabbis Meir, Simeon ben Yohai and Judah ben Ilai, he became the greatest scholar of his day. He never stopped learning, for he tells us (Talmud: Makkot 10a), "I have learned a little from my teachers, still more from my colleagues, but most from my pupils." Considerable wealth, added to his scholarship, conferred on him unprecedented authority; of him it was said, "From the time of Moses there had not been such a combination of scholarship and authority." To cap it all, Judah the Patriarch enjoyed the intimacy of the Roman emperor (though it is difficult to say which one; possibly the reference is to Avidius Cassius, Roman general and formerly governor of Syria). Some twenty anecdotes are related of the friendship; one, for example, tells of the emperor's preference for Judah's unheated food on the Sabbath to the hot dishes which he could enjoy on weekdays, to which Judah replied that the ingredients were the same but that in the hot food one thing was lacking, the Sabbath, which sanctified the meal.

In view of his unparalleled position among the Tannaim, Judah is referred to as "Rabbi"—that is all, just *The Rabbi*.

The *opus magnum* of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch was the final compilation of the Mishnah. This he accomplished towards the end of the second century. To the Mishnah of Rabbi Meir he added elements of the Midrash Halakah (legalistic verse-by-verse interpretation) and other material which had received specialized attention in the various schools.

After having compiled the complete Mishnah he seems to have put it through a further revision, so painstakingly was the work done.

Judah insisted on issuing the Mishnah in the Hebrew language rather than in the Aramaic which was then spoken: it is a scholarly Hebrew, that differs somewhat from the classical Hebrew of the Bible. Even in his household all were obliged to speak Hebrew, the domestics too, and it is reported that to gain a clear understanding of some difficult Biblical Hebrew words scholars would listen to the Hebrew as spoken by the servants.

Whether Rabbi Judah actually put the Mishnah into writing or whether he only organized and redacted it to be transmitted orally is a matter of dispute. One scholar, late in the tenth century, states that Judah did write and publish the Mishnah; another scholar, more than a century later, insists that this and the accompanying traditional material was not set in writing until two or three hundred years after Judah's age. Memory was indeed relied upon to a large extent, and was assisted by special mnemonic devices of association, but there is evidence suggesting some manuscripts, perhaps notes jotted down as aids to memory, which may have been consulted by Rabbi Judah. It is therefore not unlikely that Rabbi Judah did commit the Mishnah to writing.

The Mishnah is divided into six Orders, according to subject matter. The first Order, Seeds, deals with religious regulations connected with agriculture, with the exception that the opening Tractate is devoted to prayers and blessings. The second Order, Seasons, has to do with seasonal festivals and fasts, the Sabbath, the New Moon, the New Year. The third Order, Women, contains laws on marriage, divorce, adultery, vows. The fourth Order, Damages, presents civil and criminal law; to it is appended Chapters of the Fathers, *Pirke Abot*, which is not legalistic but a synopsis of the living chain which carried the tradition from Moses to Shammai and Hillel and which gives the ethical dicta of leaders from the days of the Great Synagogue. The fifth Order, Holy Things, treats of the Temple and its worship, of ritual and

consecrated things. The sixth Order, Purities, relates to ceremonial purity and impurity. Each Order is subdivided into Tractates and then into Chapters and Paragraphs.

The diversity of subjects and sources makes for considerable variation in the character of the Mishnah. The arrangement is not rigidly systematic but sometimes diverts to follow a grouping convenient for purposes of instruction. The style is generally concise, reflecting a more expansive treatment elsewhere—in the *viva voce* discourse. Where a decision had been arrived at through an authoritative opinion or by a majority vote of the school the decision is recorded anonymously. Nevertheless the opposing views are given as well, mentioned first, in fact, to show that they had received careful consideration.

Although slight additions were made after Judah's death, the Mishnah, as he redacted it, assumed unique authority. In addition to his personal prominence, it must be remembered that he must have had the backing of his Bet Din and also that he had limited to himself the right of ordaining rabbis, expositors of the Law. Hence the supreme position of *the Mishnah*.

Similar to the Mishnah which Rabbi Judah compiled, divided into the same six Orders and treating very much the same material, containing even additional material and somewhat different method, there exists an independent Mishnah compilation which appeared simultaneously with Judah's Mishnah. It is said to have been arranged by Rabbi Hiyya, a contemporary of Rabbi Judah; but lacking the authoritative acceptance given to Rabbi Judah's Mishnah, it came to be known as Tosefta, a "supplementary" Mishnah.

The other manner of working with the unwritten Law—to interpret the laws of the Pentateuch, verse-for-verse in the sequential order of verses, in such a way that each verse serves as a cue for the unwritten laws which had grown up—produced a mass of literature which was collected during the first part of the third century (shortly after Rabbi Judah's death), and called the Midrash Halakah. There is no Midrash Halakah for the Book of Genesis, since that contains no



laws. The commentary on the Book of Exodus is called the Mekilta; that on the Book of Leviticus is Sifra; that on Numbers and Deuteronomy is Sifre. Two versions developed, one which interpreted according to the method of Rabbi Akiba and the other which interpreted according to the rules of Rabbi Ishmael. Despite divergences of treatment, however, that which is taught agrees in all essential respects.

At this time, too, pains were taken to fix a standard Hebrew text for the Bible. Previously there seems to have been a degree of variation between one copy of the Hebrew Bible and another. That would never do. If religious laws were to be deduced from the Pentateuch, an unvarying text would be prerequisite. Therefore, that which was judged the correct text was decided upon and standardized during the second century, since when it has remained practically fixed.

In the third century of the Common Era the entire religion of the Jew took on a definitely established, unified and harmonized form. From the earliest days of Israel, the religion had been growing, evolving. The environment had nourished it. Experience had molded it. Reflection had mellowed it. Those were the formative centuries. Some features were outgrown. Some were enlarged. Some disappeared. All settled into their proper proportion. And now, in the third century, Judaism entered its maturity. It reached its normalcy. The fixed Bible was accepted as the revealed word of God. The Mishnah became its authoritative interpretation. The observance of its laws and the adherence to its spirit became the standards of religious requirement. And the synagogue served as the center for the religious instruction of the masses, for the services of charity and social welfare, for the uniform liturgy of worship.

Such is the studied conclusion of George Foot Moore, one of the greatest of modern historians of religion. In his thoroughgoing analysis of Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era ("Judaism," Vol. I, p. 3),\* he sums up that during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods of Jewish history,

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"Judaism brought to complete development its characteristic institutions, the school and the synagogue, in which it possessed not only a unique instrument for the education and edification of all classes of the people in religion and morality, but the centre of its religious life, and to no small extent also of its intellectual and social life. Through the study of the Scriptures and the discussions of generations of scholars it defined its religious conceptions, its moral principles, its forms of worship, and its distinctive type of piety, as well as the rules of law and observance which became authoritative for all succeeding time. In the light of subsequent history the great achievement of these centuries was the creation of a normative type of Judaism and its establishment in undisputed supremacy throughout the wide Jewish world. This goal was not reached without many conflicts of parties and sects and more than one grave political and religious crisis, but in the end the tendency which most truly represented the historical character and spirit of the religion prevailed, and accomplished the unification of Judaism."

#### 14. JEWS EVERYWHERE ADHERE TO THE NORM

THIS normal type of Judaism which developed in Palestine came to prevail in the countries outside Palestine, in the lands of the diaspora, as the one and only religion for the Jew.

Even in Alexandria, Egypt, where the peaceful inroads of Hellenism were the most extensive, Rabbinic Judaism triumphed. There are no precise records to indicate how the victory over Alexandrian Hellenism came about. In all likelihood, it resulted from the double influence of Rome and Christianity. Rome firmly set itself against Jews making proselytes: that would tend to keep extraneous elements out of Judaism. Discrimination against Jews induced those Jews enamored of Hellenism to forsake their own religion, and some of them to join Christianity: that would make the remaining Jews all the more conservative and all the more dependent on the leadership of Palestine. As a link with Palestine, the Jews of Alexandria paid a tax for the upkeep

of the patriarch and they regulated their religious life according to the calendar which was arranged and made public in Palestine.

More direct was the relationship between the Jewish population of Rome and the Judaism of Palestine. Rome harbored the oldest Jewish community in Europe. One of the earliest contacts with Rome was an embassy which Judah the Maccabee had sent to conclude a treaty against Antiochus Epiphanes. Jewish traders time and again visited Rome in the pursuit of trade and a certain number, in all probability, settled there, for already in 61 B.C.E. mention is made of an established practice among the Italian Jews of sending a Temple-tax to Jerusalem. When Pompey ravaged Palestine he brought Jews captive to Rome, and these were ransomed by Jewish citizens of Rome, becoming "Libertini," freedmen. Cæsar, friendly to the Jews, exerted his power to protect their religious institutions. Augustus continued the same policy, adding an edict that no Jews be summoned to court on the holy Sabbath. A setback was suffered at the beginning of the Common Era, when four thousand Jewish men were sent to Sardinia to fight the brigands. Some ridicule of the Jewish observances was displayed by Roman intellectuals, particularly the refusal to eat pork, the strictness of Sabbath rest, and the worship of a God without an image. Still, the tenacity of Judaism, and its worth, attracted a number of proselytes at this time. Titus, after he destroyed Jerusalem, and Hadrian sixty years later, carried away captives and thus swelled the numbers of Jews in Rome. Jews of Italy were visited on several occasions by the leading Palestinian rabbis, and before long a disciple of Rabbi Ishmael established in Rome a school of the Law. In all the study and observance of Jewish tradition, though, Palestine was looked to for leadership.

Next to Palestine in importance was the Jewish community of Babylonia. The reason for that is not difficult to ascertain. Babylonia, after all, could boast of a large, long-established and prosperous settlement of Jews. As early as the first half of the sixth century B.C.E., the destruction of the First Temple

brought to Babylonia huge deportations of leading Jewish families, of whom only a small portion returned to Palestine under Ezra. The Babylonian Jews, proud of their ancestry, were strict about marrying only Jews. They organized their own communal life, with the exilarch (chief of the exile) their political representative. The office of exilarch was hereditary among those who traced their descent from King David; the exilarch appointed "the judge of the gate" (or supreme judge) and provincial judges as well as market supervisors; he included in his retinue scholars who wore appropriate badges.

Until the third century C.E., the Babylonian Jews looked to Palestine to set the example in their religious life. The Law was studied, but for the more advanced research it was necessary to go to Palestine, as did Hillel. Little by little, the Babylonian community began to exert its own scholastic strength. An important school was founded at Nisibis; another at Nehardea, the residence of the exilarch. Early in the third century, Mar Samuel became the head of the school at Nehardea; and Rab, a disciple of Judah the Patriarch, organized a school at Sura: these two became famous. When in rapid succession external conditions in Palestine became unfavorable for study, Babylonia, as though providentially prearranged, was prepared to take its place and carry on the torch of religious leadership.

So long as conditions remained tolerable in Palestine the Mishnah and the analogous literature continued as texts for further study and exposition. From the second quarter of the third century continuing into the fifth century, this rabbinic literature was as a fertile field planted with virile seed: under the sedulous care of the rabbis of these centuries the seeds expanded, took root, sent out shoots, blossomed and bore fruit. Each phrase, each word, of the Mishnah was as a seed capable of limitless growth, even as each word of the Bible was pregnant with meaning to the makers of the Mishnah.

None of the rabbis of this period (now designated as Amoraim) could dispute the teachings of the rabbis of the

Mishnah (the Tannaim). Their primary assignment was to clarify, amplify, illustrate and apply the Mishnah for the benefit of the religious life of their own generations. To this end, if it helped matters, they could compare the statements of the Mishnah with those a Tanna recorded in the literature outside the Mishnah. This extraneous literature, outside the authoritative Mishnah, is given the name Baraita: it includes the quotations from the Tosefta and other lesser Mishnah collections and also quotations from the Halakic Midrash.

In tracing this Palestinian enlargement upon the Mishnah it is customary to distinguish four or five generations of Amoraim.

Prominent in the first generation was Rabbi Hoshaia; he was in a position to shed a good deal of light because of the large collection of Baraitas which were in his possession and which he was able to compare with the Mishnah when he came to obscure or omitted points in the Mishnah. Another teacher of this generation, Joshua ben Levi, also collected literature cognate to the Mishnah for purposes of comparison, but the greater part of his energies he devoted to determining the specific meaning of terms used in the Mishnah, setting himself the duty of questioning every linguist in Palestine were that necessary in order to arrive at the exact connotation of an unusual word: only one thrilled with the privilege of discovering and clarifying God's truth could labor so indefatigably.

Regarding Joshua ben Levi's piety numerous fine-spun legends are recorded. It is said that none other than Elijah would visit him, to carry on disputations. And there is the tale that when the angel of death arrived to demand Joshua's life, the latter flatly refused to die unless the angel would first grant him a tour through Paradise and Hell. This granted, Joshua wrote a letter to the patriarch describing the bliss of the one place and the horrors of the other. A complication arose during the unprecedented tour when Joshua, seated on a fence overlooking Paradise, borrowed the sword of the angel of death, refused to get down and vexed the angel by jumping over the fence into Paradise, whereupon the angel

desperately seized at Joshua but succeeded in catching only part of his garment. Stubbornly Joshua refused to return the sword. This was rather awkward, since without his sword the angel of death could not claim the lives of men. But God came to the rescue and ordered the return of the sword. Still, to the angel's demand that he leave Paradise, Joshua turned a deaf ear; he vowed he would not leave. Whereupon God had the records searched to ascertain whether Joshua ever violated an oath in his life. No such violation could be found. Therefore, because of his lifelong adherence to his vows, Joshua was now allowed to carry out this vow, to remain in Paradise.

The second generation of Palestinian Amoraim is distinguished by Johanan bar Nappaha and his brother-in-law and fellow student, Resh Lakish. The former, Johanan, a pupil of Judah the Patriarch, established a school of learning in Tiberias where he served as president for about fifty years, until his death at the ripe age of ninety. He was the most prominent scholar of his generation and his school stood supreme, no less than a hundred Amoraim being mentioned as his disciples. So great was his reputation that students of the foremost schools of Babylonia journeyed to Palestine to study with him. It is not difficult to understand the extent of Johanan's influence when we learn of his tolerance and broad-mindedness. He advocated the study of Greek for cultural purposes; he would not exclude women from such study; he interpreted the Biblical account of the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, saying that the angels then wanted to sing to God but that God silenced them with the words (Talmud: Megillah 9b), "The works of My hand are now sinking in the sea, and you want to rejoice"; and on the basis of the Biblical verse, "Are we not all sons of the same Father?" he insisted on treating his slaves humanely, having them eat the same portions and dishes which he ate. In the story of Judaism it is valuable to know that Johanan bar Nappaha established basic rules for interpreting the Mishnah, even as in earlier centuries rules had been set for interpreting the Bible.

Johanán called Resh Lakish his right hand. It was he who induced Resh Lakish, a powerfully-built giant of a man, to resign as showman in a Roman circus in order to become a scholar, and incidentally to marry Johanán's sister. Resh Lakish did not disappoint his brother-in-law. His sharp mind was able so to smooth out difficulties between two conflicting and contradictory statements that the saying arose: to see him at work in a house of study is to see him take two mountains and grind them together. Resh Lakish fearlessly voiced his opinions, perhaps because he could always rely on his physical strength in the event that the argument became heated. It was indeed daring of him to suggest in that age of literal acceptance of the Bible that the Book of Job was only a drama or parable and that there never did exist a man called Job who lived through the experiences recorded. The same daring led to his expressed opinion that the names of angels originated in Babylon, not among the Jews. No matter how many authorities were opposed to a particular opinion, he judged it independently on its own intrinsic strength and soundness: all the more credit to him.

The remaining generations of Amoraim in Palestine gradually decreased in importance. Whichever scholars did stand out were members of Johanán's school at Tiberias, and they continued upon the foundations established by Johanán. But the best work had already been done. What followed simply continued on the earlier momentum. Political conditions, shifting from bad to worse, squelched whatever impulse there may have been for fresh, independent development.

#### 15. CRISIS AGAIN CRYSTALLIZES JUDAISM

ROME was in control of Palestine. The years from 235 to 284 witnessed one long stretch of anarchy in Rome. Then Diocletian became the absolute monarch of Rome, assisted by three fellow-rulers. Determined to unify the harassed Roman government, he issued an edict prohibiting the practice of the Christian religion: it was his purpose to restore the Roman heathen worship of old as part of the program

for national integration. He ordered the Samaritans, too, to worship idols with libations; acquiescence in this regard classed the Samaritans as heathens, and thereby completed the cleavage from Judaism.

In 323 Constantine became the supreme and only ruler of the Roman Empire and just before he died in 337 was baptized into Christianity. Under him Christianity became a tolerated religion and then an established religion. Becoming Christian in name did not always mean that the baptized emperors of Rome became likewise Christian in benevolence and in brotherliness. Moreover, when certain of the Church Fathers thus gained political power, they who had been persecuted became the persecutors. So, from the fourth until the nineteenth century, history records the sad spectacle of the mother religion, Judaism, suffering all manner of sorrow and contumely from a perversion of the daughter religion, Christianity.

Constantius II, son of Constantine, with the proclamation "My will is the Church Law," imposed dreadful restrictions, because of which many of the Palestinian scholars, out of despair, migrated to Babylonia. Roman soldiers passing through Palestine compelled Jews to violate many of their laws. There is one instance of the Torah having been burned, an injury which instigated a Jewish insurrection; four Palestinian cities, we are told, were destroyed in the way of punishment. Jews, moreover, were forbidden to announce their yearly calendar, and because of this, tradition recounts, one of the patriarchs fixed a permanent calendar for all time.

Devotees of Judaism breathed with relief during the reign of Julian, for he believed in freedom of religion, holding, "You are all brothers; God is the Father of us all." It seems that Julian even promised to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, but apparently nothing was done about it because of his death in a military campaign shortly afterwards: had he lived longer, who knows what turn the Jewish religion may have taken. As it was, Emperor Theodosius I, in the year 380, made Christianity the state religion: all other public worship



was prohibited. This was a death-blow to heathenism, which, banished from the cities, withdrew to secret places in the villages: here we have the origin of the term paganism, which is derived from the Latin word *paganus* ("peasant"). Church dignitaries led frenzied attacks against heathen and Jewish worship. The continuance of Judaism became practically impossible. Finally, in 425, under Theodosius II the Palestinian office of patriarch came to an end.

Altogether there had been fifteen patriarchs. For some time the patriarchate had been weakening. It had fallen considerably from the high standard of Judah the Patriarch. No longer was the patriarch the first scholar of the generation, or even the head of the school. His office became primarily political—in the unsavory sense of that term—and occasionally he was amenable to bribes in the matter of appointing rabbis for the individual communities. It is told of one such appointed rabbi, an *ignoramus*, who had not a thought to convey to the assemblage through his "interpreter," the public orator. The public orator therefore arose and—quoting as his text the verse from Habakkuk (2:19): "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach"—he added, "Shall this man teach? Behold he is surrounded by gold and silver, but he has no spirit in him; he is naught else but a piece of wood with gold and silver around him." When such a pass had been reached, it was just as well that the patriarchate came to a close.

With conditions so distressing, there was the threat again of all the accumulated learning scattering to the winds unless it were gathered and preserved. Therefore, in the first quarter of the fifth century, the comments and additions and decisions relative to the Mishnah were assembled in a collection which is known generally as the Talmud Yerushalmi, the Jerusalem Talmud ("teaching"). The name is not quite accurate, since there really were no Jews in Jerusalem at this time: Palestinian Talmud, would be the truer description.

The collection seems to have been made abruptly, as though pressed to completion by reason of apprehension for the future of Palestine Jewry. Not sufficient time and attention

were given to a compilation of such proportions. Large portions are missing : the entire Order, Holy Things (Kodashim), and all but three Chapters of the Order, Purities (Tohorot), are missing : they may never have existed, or they may have been compiled only to have been lost in the stress of some emergency. The language of the Jerusalem Talmud is not uniform, classical passages being in Hebrew and those of popular origin and content written in the colloquial Aramaic. As we would imagine, most of the Talmud is of a legal nature, only about one sixth being non-legal or homiletic.

This was a time for gathering in all that was valuable, in anticipation of the threatening storm. In addition to the Talmud, special collections were made of the homilies which the rabbis preached in the synagogues and discussed in the schools and in the light of which the Jews thought and lived their religious life. These homiletic interpretations of Biblical texts were called Midrash Haggadah ("narrative") to differentiate them from the legal interpretations, Midrash Halakah. They were popular discourses aiming at religious instruction and moral discipline. Although they revolved about the application of a Biblical text, they drew profusely from various sources of illustration, seeking constantly to interest, to fascinate the attention, sometimes even to entertain.

There are two arrangements of homiletic Midrashim. One arrangement follows the continuous series of weekly Sabbath readings from the Pentateuch, covering the entire Pentateuch in the course of three years, as was the custom in Palestinian worship ; each weekly reading was called a Sidra, and therefore these are the Sedarim Midrashim. The second arrangement is according to addresses based on the Biblical readings for certain special Sabbaths and for the Festivals ; these are called Pesikta Midrashim.

Of the Sedarim Midrashim (the first method of arrangement which follows the regular order of Sabbath pericopes) there were competing collections, but the one which is known as Midrash Rabbah ("the large Midrash") became the most popular and the most frequently read : it includes a volume for each of the Five Books of Moses and also a volume for

each of the five "Scrolls"—Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther—read in the synagogue on designated occasions; the oldest and the most important is the Midrash on the Book of Genesis, which lends itself so well to homiletic fancy (nearly a quarter of Genesis Rabbah concerns itself with but the first five chapters of Genesis); much of the material goes back very far, with a gathering of the material indicated during the second and third century and a final compilation in the early part of the fifth century; the latest insertion is the Midrash on Numbers which probably did not assume its final form until the twelfth century. A rival group of Midrashim for the triennial Sabbath cycle of the Pentateuch are the Tanhuma Midrashim, called such because of the abundance of homilies attributed to Rabbi Tanhuma bar Abba who lived in Palestine at the end of the fourth century: a characteristic of this collection is the frequent beginning with the words Yelammedenu Rabbenu—"may our master teach us"—after which there follows the question on some legal point, and when the legal matter is disposed of in a few remarks there then comes the extensive homily, for which the legal bit was intended only as an opening lead, and the conclusion usually sounds the note of hope for better days to come.

Of the Pesikta arrangement of Midrashim—those that deal with special occasions, the Sabbath during Hanukkah, four Sabbaths preceding Passover, the Prophetic readings on the twelve Sabbaths preceding Succoth, etc., and the Festivals—there were likewise competing collections. The oldest of the Pesikta collections is called Pesikta d'Rab Kahana, probably completed in the seventh century. The Midrash Tanhuma also has Pesikta homilies. And in the middle of the ninth century the Pesikta Rabbati ("the large Pesikta") was composed, but this is largely an assembly of many homilies found elsewhere. There was bound to be a good deal of overlapping and repetition.

All these homiletic addresses dwelt upon the same fundamentals of Jewish life which are taught in the Mishnah and similar legalistic literature. Why then were they necessary?

Because preaching popularizes teaching—good preaching, of course. There is nothing like an ingenious twist of a text, or a specific illustration, or a good story, or an occasional dash of humor, to captivate the attention and stir the imagination. By contrast, nothing can be as dry as a law-book. Thus we find that the homilies of the rabbis breathed life into the Law of Judaism. Their addresses, in each generation, renewed a zeal for living the Jewish life.

#### 16. THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

If the political skies in Palestine clouded up, they at least remained clear in Babylonia. That was one advantage in the dispersion of the Jew to several countries. In the more favorable surroundings of Babylonia the enlarged interpretation of the Mishnah enjoyed more extensive and more prolonged concentration.

A spurt of activity was introduced in Babylonian scholarship through the great stimulus of the leaders, Rab and Samuel. Rab's real name was Abba; he was called Rab because that appellation means "master" and he was, indeed, a master of Jewish lore. Having studied under Judah the Patriarch, he brought to Babylon the authoritative Mishnah which became the text for further amplification. The city Sura, where he opened a school, was notorious as a seat of ignorance but by his genius he transformed it into a seat of learning, which it remained for many centuries. Because of his wealth Rab was able to maintain many disciples; he is said to have enrolled twelve hundred of them. To accommodate even larger numbers, and also to enable them to earn their own livelihood, he would assign them individual research for a period of five months and then have them assemble for a month of communal study and review. These were the two months of the year which were called Kallah months, months of assembly—one preceding the Passover spring festival and the other preceding the autumn Rosh Hashanah season. In addition to his scholarship, Rab was gifted with magnificent powers of speech. The word went the rounds

that when he read the ritual and praised God he performed a "mizwah" (a meritorious act) simply with the grandeur of his voice. His sermonic orations drew tremendous crowds; on the Sabbath preceding Holidays, it is said, the influx of visitors to Sura to hear him exceeded the housing accommodations of the city and overflowed to the banks of the Euphrates where the pilgrim audience was obliged to spend the night.

The good work of Rab was perpetuated in the school at Sura by his disciple Rab Huna who succeeded as head for forty years, an unusually long term during which he could achieve much constructive work. Unlike his predecessor, Rab Huna had no independent means but was forced to struggle as a farmer for his livelihood, so that whenever he was called upon to act as a judge he stipulated that someone else be appointed to labor for him in the fields while he turned his attention to the affairs of the people. Rab Huna is only one illustration of the majority of the teachers and rabbis who were by no means sequestered from the battle of life, living in "splendid isolation," nor did they resort to their scholarship as a tool wherewith to earn an income, nor did they establish an ecclesiastic caste wherewith to enrich themselves. They worked with their fellow men shoulder to shoulder, and only their spare time, their leisure hours, could they devote to religious instruction and guidance. In his later years, when Rab Huna had become well-to-do, he was able to give his entire time to his school, by having attendants look after the fields. It was then his delight to apportion a large part of his wealth to the support of many poor students.

Rab Samuel, a contemporary of Rab, did for Nehardea what the latter had accomplished in Sura. Of the two, Samuel was the more versatile. His knowledge of astronomy was extensive for those days, and we have his own testimony that he knew the paths of the stars of the sky as well as the streets of his native city. In the practice of medicine as well he acquired considerable skill, specializing in a cure for the eyes. His expertness in the understanding of civil law is indicated in the opinion of the Talmud (Niddah 24 b) that "the law

is according to Rab in matters of ritual prohibition, but according to Samuel with regard to civil suits." That the law of the country in which Jews live is binding upon them, remains as one of Samuel's most important statements and expresses the attitude adhered to in Jewish practice the world over. A significant dictum, one which emphasizes broad-mindedness and honesty while condemning hypocrisy and deceit, is: "Don't steal the mind of human beings, not even of heathens" (Talmud: Hullin 94a); wrong advice and two-faced dealings were to him tantamount to stealing the mind. With regard to the coming of the Messiah, too, Samuel exhibits his enlightened views: among many of the rabbis, speculation as to what would occur in the days of the millennium oftentimes exceeded the bounds of levelheadedness—one, for example, gave his opinion that in those golden days loaves of bread would grow from trees—but Samuel held that the only difference between the present world order and the days of the Messiah could be freedom from subjugation to gentile authorities and powers, and that has become the most generally accepted Jewish version of the Messiah.

In the year 259, five years after Samuel's death, Babylonia was invaded and Nehardea destroyed. This necessitated the removal of Samuel's great academy to Pumbeditha. Although Nehardea was rebuilt several years later it never regained its former scholastic fame.

It was Rab Judah ben Ezekiel who reorganized the school in Pumbeditha, by the river Euphrates. He had received most of his knowledge from Rab but was more attached to Samuel. Especially brilliant in legal cases involving money matters, Judah ben Ezekiel earned for himself the description, "the sharp one of Pumbeditha." He worked out many new points in the elaboration of Jewish Law: four hundred of his statements are mentioned, in the name of Rab and Samuel. Judah looked askance at the departure of Babylonian disciples to study in Palestine under Rab Johanan; he was eager to develop the local academies. Through this great energy Pumbeditha did indeed become first in the order of academies, surpassing that of Sura.

The leading scholars after the death of Judah ben Ezekiel (299), were Rabbah bar Nahmani and Rab Joseph. Joseph was nicknamed "Sinai" because of his prodigious memory, for he could carry in his mind all the tradition which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Rabbah, famous for brilliance rather than memory, was spoken of as one whose mental acumen could uproot mountains. Contrasts in type, yet they both consecrated their God-given powers to the glory of God. Rabbah took over the leadership of the Pumbeditha academy and during his twenty-two years of supervision he added to the prestige which Judah ben Ezekiel had given it. To enliven his lectures, it was customary for him to open with a touch of humor and frequently to puzzle his audience with paradoxical questions, but when he came to the point of his message he did not hesitate boldly and frankly to reproach his coreligionists for falling below the high standard of Torah, and, to tell the truth, this habit of talking straight from the shoulder made him many enemies. At his death, Joseph succeeded him as principal but lived to hold that high office only two and one half years.

When the vacancy was declared in Pumbeditha, after Joseph's death, four candidates presented themselves. It was decided that the four discuss a particular subject and that the one rendering the best discourse be chosen. Abaye won the audition and the position. He was pious, modest and humble as well as learned. But being of limited means, he was not able to subsidize as many scholars as did a rival teacher in the city of Mahoza. He had only two hundred; the other attracted one thousand.

Thus learning continued in Babylonia. Troublous times in Palestine brought to Babylonia an influx of Palestinian scholars. A teacher of influence would occasionally open a school of his own and attract scholars about him; after his death his school would likely close, and the scholars would return to the more established schools. Opinions between schools were interchanged. Therefore, although there were many academies the trend of development was rather uniform, following the well-established lines of the Mishnah, to enrich

and deepen the content and spirit of authoritative Judaism.

Finally, under Rab Ashi, the voluminous discussions and elaborations of the Mishnah were arranged. As head of the Sura school he reclaimed for it its former prestige. For fifty-two years did he occupy that prominent post. Moreover, he had means, he was friendly with the rulers, and it was only a matter of time before he was recognized as the pre-eminent Jew of Babylonia. A rare combination of qualifications had singled out Judah the Patriarch, more than two centuries previously, as the only one capable of editing the Mishnah and of giving it unique authority, so now Rab Ashi came to the fore with the requisite qualifications for the complicated task of editing the vast amount of material which had accumulated all these decades upon decades. The effort occupied many years, but by the time of Ashi's death in 427, the work was ninety-five percent completed. When completed, it was to become the Babylonian Talmud.

After Ashi's death, the undisturbed rabbinic preoccupation with Judaism was shattered. The Persian ruler Yezdegird II instituted the first persecutions the Jews in Babylonia ever felt. Influenced by the Magian priests of the dualistic religion of fire-worship, he sought to compel the peoples of other religions in his realm to accept his own: "You should have the same religion your king has, especially as we have to account for you to God." His orders prohibited the keeping of the Sabbath, and the recitation of the Shema declaration of Monotheism in the Jewish Service. To overcome the latter prohibition, it seems that the Shema was introduced at another part of the Service, in the Kedushah, where its presence would not be suspected — and even after the persecutions ceased it retained that position as a memento. . . In growing, religion acquires scars of combat that never disappear.

For more than two centuries after Ashi's death conditions fluctuated from bad to moderate, but they did not take a definite turn for the good until the year 640 when the Arabs arrived in Babylonia, and then they remained favorable until the eleventh century.

Before the advent of the Arabs, though, when faced with



the danger of censorship or possibly dispersion or annihilation, the Jewish leaders decided to close the Babylonian version of the Talmud and to set it to writing. Realizing that the activities of the schools would be seriously interfered with, they saw the necessity of preserving the Talmud and of circulating copies of it among the people. They therefore took advantage of a temporary cessation of persecution, following the year 485, and brought the Talmud to a close. Rab Ashi had already accomplished the greatest part of the task, and yet it took approximately to the end of the fifth century to reach the final conclusion.

The end of the fifth century also marked the end of the period of the Amoraim, the designation applied to the scholars mentioned in the Talmud but not in the Mishnah. The teachers who followed in the sixth century are known as Saboraim, the explainers and interpreters, who could no longer express their own opinions, but were limited to expounding opinions contained in the Talmud.

We have seen that there are really two Talmuds, both based on the authoritative Mishnah of Judah the Patriarch. One contains the teachings of Palestine and the other the teachings of Babylonia. The Babylonian Talmud, however, played the more important part in the religious life of the Jew, because at a later date conditions in Babylonia improved and allowed that country to continue to function as a center of Jewish life, whereas Palestine never did regain its greatness. Actually there are no great differences between the two Talmuds, for there always were communications between the schools of the two countries, with frequent exchange of information.

The Babylonian Talmud, known as Talmud Babli, has perhaps wider interests and certainly greater length. It includes also more non-legal material (Midrash Haggadah), amounting to about one third of the entire contents; this is so because there were not as many separate collections of homilies in Babylonia as there were in Palestine. Though the more complete of the two, even in the Babylonian Talmud many sections are missing. Talmud Babli is familiarly known

as "Shas," a Hebrew abbreviation for the words which mean "six Orders," corresponding to the six Orders or volumes of the Mishnah. Whereas there are sixty-three Tractates in the six Orders of the Mishnah, only thirty-seven are to be found in the Babylonian Talmud: the Palestinian Talmud thus becomes important for filling in gaps, provided of course that the passages for supplementation are to be found even in the Palestinian Talmud.

The religious principles and practices of the Talmud are virtually the same as of the Mishnah, being an extension of the latter; in fact, the text of the Talmud first quotes the passage from the Mishnah and then elaborates upon it (the non-Mishnaic discussion by itself being designated Gemara). Once Rabbinic Judaism was established it maintained a character of permanence. While it is true that the more profuse data of the Talmud, the variety of illustration and utilization, must of necessity represent an advance and a modicum of change, yet generally speaking the religion of the Mishnah remained unchanged. The Talmud (which, when not otherwise designated, means the Babylonian Talmud) — with the Mishnah embodied in it — became the authority and source for the Jewish religious life of the Middle Ages.

#### 17. HOW JUDAISM HELPED MOHAMMED FORMULATE HIS RELIGION

BABYLONIA remained the hub of Talmudic activity, but startling events were stirring Arabia during the seventh century. Arabia, because of proximity to Palestine, had frequently served as a haven of refuge to troubled Jewry. Groups of Jews, it is likely, made their way thither at the time of the destruction of the First Temple. Definitely it is known that they fled to Arabia when the Second Temple was annihilated. So the stream of migration continued in the various times of crisis. Even from Babylonia a large body of Jews betook themselves to Arabia in the second half of the fifth century when the Persian restrictions became oppressive. Altogether, then, there was quite a Jewish population in Arabia.

In the city of Yathrib, later called Medina, there were three independent Jewish tribes; the district of Khaibar they inhabited; in the south too, in the district of Yemen, there were large numbers of them scattered among the Arabs. The Jews and the Arabs both being Semites, with similar language and customs and tribal organization, managed to get along very well as neighbors. Jews were superior in one regard, in their religion and in their possession of the Bible—Arabs called them “Ahl al-Kitab,” People of the Book. It was relatively easy for Judaism to acquire converts amongst the heathen Arabs since by their own customs they were already circumcised. We know of many tribes coming over completely to Judaism. Indeed, the history of sixth century Arabia records a small Jewish kingdom, of short duration but of widespread and prolonged fame. It stands to reason that in such circumstances the way of Jewish living must have penetrated into the life of Arabia and must have predisposed even the heathens to a type of message approximating that of Judaism. Thus the Jewish religion prepared the way for Mohammed and the religion of Mohammed.

Mohammed, “the praised one,” was born in Mecca in 569, or possibly 571. His father had died prior to his birth and his mother he lost at the age of six. Thus handicapped, Mohammed spent his childhood at hard work, among the Bedouins of the desert. With his uncle’s help he became a merchant, travelling with caravans to Syria and Palestine. When twenty-five years old, he entered into matrimony, marrying a wealthy widow fifteen years his senior. She helped him enormously in his trade, he admits, through her piety and shrewdness. Until the age of forty, Mohammed was the average successful business man. Then something happened and Mohammed stepped out of the anonymity of the world’s masses into the notability of the world’s masters.

In his travels for trade Mohammed had met many interesting Jews and Christians to whose talks on religious matters he had listened intently. He had been greatly impressed by the Bible stories, especially those regarding Abraham. Although illiterate, Mohammed possessed a fine, receptive mind

which retained this religious information, so that, in time, when the knowledge of higher standards of religious conduct made him disgusted with the heathenism of his country — the worship of the Kaaba Stone in Mecca which had given rise to over three hundred idols, and also the extreme immorality in the practice of drowning excess infant girls who might be hard to marry off and thus prone to prove a liability to the family — Mohammed had something better to offer : the Monotheism and the ethical patterns which he had learned. Undoubtedly he was influenced in good measure by his wife's relative, Waraka, who had accepted Judaism and who knew the Bible well.

It was at first a great struggle for Mohammed to modify the religion of the Arabs. In the earlier part of his activity, the period in Mecca from about 612 to 622, he made use of economic conditions to propagate his new doctrine. Power was then monopolized in the hands of the few rich, and he was sure to attract a large following of poor merchants when he preached the Jewish idea : God is the possessor of all ; he punishes the rich who are wicked ; therefore should the wealthy give charity to the poor, and God will reward them.

The new faith Mohammed promulgated he called Islam, meaning "complete devotion," or "surrender" to God. The believer who surrenders himself to God's will he designated as Muslim (a grammatic declension of "Islam") or as we pronounce it, Moslem. In Mecca he worked out the essential part of the Koran, consisting of one hundred and fourteen Suras, chapters, speeches with intense messages. The doctrines which he here set forth were borrowed largely from Judaism. He began : "There is no God beside Allah" — but he added : "There is no prophet beside Mohammed." The Trinity and the use of images in worship he opposed. His ritual he based on that of Judaism, even insisting that his followers turn to Jerusalem in prayer and that they fast on the Day of Atonement, as did the Jews.

In 622 Mohammed was forced to flee from Mecca because of the disturbance he had incited among the heathen tribes. He

escaped to Yathrib, the residence of three Jewish tribes. Here Mohammed sought the support of the Jews. They did not particularly oppose him, for they were pleased to see the growth of Jewish doctrine and the emphasis on Monotheism. His scribe even was a Jew. But when Mohammed persisted over and over again that he was God's foremost chosen messenger, trouble began. Jews would not agree that "there is no prophet beside Mohammed"—certainly they could not accept him in any way in the nature of a Messiah. No amount of kindness on his part would budge them. Then did his love turn to hate. A year after his arrival in Yathrib—which subsequently came to be called Medina, the City of the Prophet—he severed his treaty of friendship with the Jews of the city, and attacked them with the speech which is recorded in the second Sura. He now wanted his worshippers to face Mecca, not Jerusalem. He now argued that the Bible really contained references to his coming and that the Jews deliberately deleted them.

Encouraged by a victory over the heathen tribe which had earlier forced him to withdraw from Mecca, Mohammed now took the offensive. He made it his objective to dispose of the Jewish tribes in Yathrib, attacking first the Kainukaa tribe. Before hostilities began he saw to it that the leaders were secretly killed off one by one. Then on the Sabbath he arrived at a Jewish meeting, demanding that they accept his faith. A negative rejoinder amounted to a declaration of war. Victorious, Mohammed compelled the Jews of this tribe to settle their affairs and in three days to quit Yathrib, even if it did mean leaving behind their extensive estates. Mohammed was a strategist. He attacked the Jewish tribes one by one. If only those tribes had realized that in union there is strength! Many times at the point of defeat, Mohammed pulled through with brilliant and frequently ruthless campaigns, until he succeeded in overcoming his enemies, heathen and Jewish. The erstwhile simple merchant now became the mighty ruler of a vast domain. In 630 Mecca capitulated and immediately became the sanctuary of Islam. One by one, the Arab tribes which had surrendered ac-

cepted Islam, but not so the Jewish tribes. Still, toward the end of his life Mohammed was tolerant to the Jews, now that their strength was broken. The burden he imposed consisted mainly in special poll and land taxes.

From the standpoint of Judaism there is very little that is new or original in Islam and it is therefore not surprising that the Jews found no need to change their religion to that of Mohammed. To them, Islam was a compromise between Judaism and the heathenism of Arabia, with a certain amount of Christianity interpolated.

The names, Allah, Koran, Sura, Islam, and the vast number of other appellations relevant to the Mohammedan religion are Arabic forms traceable to cognate Hebraic terminology. Among the doctrines of Islam, the belief in Monotheism and the importance of charity and hospitality are in line with the Jewish teachings, although Judaism would not picture the deity so naïvely anthropomorphic as in Islam, nor with so much emphasis on Satan and the angels, nor with the same type of luscious reward promised for the world beyond. The doctrine of fatalism, that everything is predestined, and the belief in Mohammed as the greatest of God, Jews certainly could not accept. The Islamic duty of praying with utter devotion, as though cut off from the world, is thoroughly Jewish, although the specific ceremonials are not. Akin to Jewish obligation is the injunction to fast, but it receives a decided Mohammedan character in that one month of the summer, the month Ramadan, is observed by refraining from food, drink and smoking during the daytime, with permission to do all these things at night, to the extent of carrying them to licentious excesses. The pilgrimage to Mecca the birth-place and to Medina the burial-place of Mohammed is a further duty of Islam. As judged by non-Moslems, the most objectionable obligation imposed on believers is the religious duty of Holy War to convert the world to that religion, the booty of such warfare to be divided, half to Mohammed's descendants and half to charity.

Although Mohammed died in 632, Islam lived on, and through the impulse of Holy War spread rapidly to North

Africa, Palestine, Byzantium, the Sassanian Empire, and to Spain.

In the world of the twentieth century there have come to be more than two hundred and fifty million Moslems, and if the belief in the One God or the practice of charity has helped these people to live more abundantly than as heathens, then may not Judaism look upon this achievement as a noteworthy offshoot in the growth of the Jewish religion?

#### 18. THROUGH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS JUDAISM FLOURISHES

IN 640 the Arabs conquered Babylonia and the surrounding area, known together as Mesopotamia and named Irak by the Arabs. The significance of this conquest is appreciated when it is remembered that Babylonia was still the center of Jewish activity. In view of the Magian repression of Judaism there, the Jewish population received the Arabs with open arms and even gave valuable assistance to the invaders, for which they were granted the privileges of autonomy.

Under the new arrangement of Jewish self-government, the exilarch, who had been responsible for the taxes from his fellow-Jews, was recognized as the political head. The installation of the exilarch was conducted with great ceremony: on that particular Sabbath there was a solemn procession in the streets; in the synagogue a special platform was erected for him and the leading scholars; when he was honored with the reading of the Scroll of the Law, it was brought over to him; and he was given special mention in the Kaddish prayer. He enjoyed a special income from private taxation, and he had the right to appoint the supreme judge as also the judges of the separate communities. The residence of the exilarch was at Sura until the second half of the eighth century, and afterwards at Bagdad.

Apart from the political set-up, the religious life of the Jew was guided by a dual leadership of the two Geonim. Gaon was the title applied to the principals of the schools at Sura and at Pumbeditha. The full title, President of the Academy

"Excellence ('Gaon') of Jacob," was abbreviated by singling out the most important word, Gaon. Although this title came into being at about the end of the sixth century, after the last of the Saboraim, little is known of the Geonim until the Arab conquest of 640, after which that office continued until the middle of the eleventh century. For the first two centuries of the gaonate, only the head of the Sura school was called Gaon—Rab Ashi had placed that academy in the forefront—while the president of Pumbeditha held a subordinate position, for he had to be at the same time a member of the Sura academy; at the public functions of the exilarch the Gaon of Sura preceded his colleague upon entering, and he sat at the right of the exilarch whereas the leader of Pumbeditha sat at the left. The custom developed of supporting the academies in this manner: when a rabbi had a difficult religious problem he forwarded it to the schools for solution and included a donation for whichever school he specified: in the event of unspecified donations, the money was divided in the proportions of two-thirds for Sura and one-third for Pumbeditha, but with a later shifting in the importance of the schools, beginning with the tenth century, an equal division of the funds was made.

Each of the academies consisted of seventy ordained scholars, corresponding to the number in the Sanhedrin of old in Jerusalem. These scholars sat in the first seven rows of the lecture hall: ten to a row, with a chairman for each row. Disciples filled the remaining available seats. At the head of the seventy scholars was the Gaon and second to the Gaon was the supreme judge. Each academy had jurisdiction over certain provinces in Mesopotamia, from which they received revenue, and over which they judged. The judges were vested with the authority of supervising religious law and moral conduct. Two elders in each city would be chosen to inform the judge of conditions in the city, to help him in his work, and even to supervise the activities of the judge, but in case of an unworthy appointee to demand that he be deposed.

The communal leaders were given powers of enforcement by the secular authorities where monetary cases were involved,



but in purely religious cases they had no means of punishment other than social ostracism of the first, second or third degree, with the recommendation of severity for cases of immorality. In their closely knit communal life, social ostracism was a good enough threat to enforce obedience to the religious law. Thus the moral and ethical and ritual requirements of Judaism were not merely to be preached, not merely to be appreciated, but to be practiced. The religious as well as the civil law had "teeth"—the all-important power of compulsion.

The work of the Geonim was mainly to teach the Talmud and to elucidate the difficult passages. More than that, they gave decisions to questions which were not directly answered in the Talmud, either because the Talmud had failed to consider them or because new conditions brought new problems. The main result was to confirm the standardized Judaism of the rabbis, and beyond that, the degree of advance was only that which the new circumstances dictated.

The influence of the Geonim was at first only over Babylonia. But with the Islamic conquest of a great part of the civilized world, Jews, scattered far and wide, were brought closer together, with Babylonia the focal point. From France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Northern Africa, religious questions came to the Geonim. Their studied replies were accepted as authoritative. For guidance, the Geonim themselves naturally resorted to the Talmud which they knew, the Babylonian Talmud, and thus they established the Babylonian Talmud as binding rather than the Palestinian Talmud.

The responses which they gave to the avalanche of questions constitute a great commentary on the Talmud. About five thousand of these Responsa are still preserved, but altogether there must have been about twenty or thirty thousand Responsa in the literature of the Geonim, a large-scale correspondence course in Judaism.

#### 19. PAYYETANIC POETRY

To the Jews of Palestine, too, the extensive Arabic conquests brought a shade of relief. It gave them greater access to

Jerusalem, not only for purposes of plaintive pilgrimage but also to settle there. To Jerusalem the school of Tiberias transferred its activities. There is an indication that a gaonate now flourished in Palestine, but little is known beyond the sheer fact; the destruction of the records in subsequent centuries deprive us of further information. We do know somewhat more fully that the Arab environment in which the Jews now found themselves awakened interest in poetry, especially prayers set to poetry, which in Judaism are known as Piyyutim.

The Psalms of the Bible reached a peak of excellence in prayerful poetry. Then, after a lapse of many centuries, the poetic expression of religion again came to the fore, in the Piyyutim.

What was the underlying cause for this renaissance? There is considerable uncertainty. It may be traceable to an edict made in 553 by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, prohibiting in the synagogue Service the use of what he calls "deuterosis," which he claims is not contained in Scripture and is therefore not divine but is the invention of the people. What then is this "deuterosis"? Most probably the sermons, based on a Midrashic interpretation of the Sabbath Scripture reading, and intended to encourage the observance of Judaism while also to hearten the worshippers with a concluding reference to the better days of the Messiah which are yet to come. Such a message of invigoration would fortify the Jewish resistance against any acceptance of Christianity, and that was contrary to the wishes of Justinian. If these indispensable sermons were prohibited, it would be necessary for Jews to resort to a stratagem. The reader of the Service could compose poetry resembling the regular prayers but really containing the elements of a sermon and embodying the same religious stimulus! Hence, the possible origin of the Piyyutim.

This liturgical poetry which seems to have begun in the sixth century, in a time of persecution, broadened in the poetic milieu of the Arabs. Payyetananim is the name given to the authors of the Piyyutim, and the oldest known com-

poser of this synagoga poetry was Jose ben Jose, who used blank verse but no rhyme. Yannai was the Payyetan who introduced rhyme, which even the Psalms did not employ; he had a Piyyut for each Sabbath of the year, each of the Piyyutim being a mixture of both legal doctrine and moral preachment. His disciple Eleazar Kalir, of the middle of the seventh century, employed rhyme regularly, and it is reasonable to conclude that he was influenced by the famous Syriac poetry. So far as we can tell, the three of these Payyetananim lived in Tiberias; if so, Tiberias was the home of the Piyyut.

At this time too, in the middle of the seventh century, Tiberias figured as a center for Jewish grammarians. The vocalization of the Hebrew text of the Bible originated here. The scholars who devoted themselves to the exact reading of the vowels for the Hebrew words, scholars who are known as Masorites, scrutinized the words of the text with painstaking care. They examined what had been done previously in this regard and acquainted themselves with all the traditions relevant to the reading of the text. Inasmuch as the original Hebrew spelled out only the consonants, it took a good deal of scholarship and understanding of the grammar to fill in the dots and dashes which were placed under the consonantal letters, or sometimes above them, to indicate the vowels. Once this was done, it established an unchangeable text, which was at the same time easier to read. The accents and notes for chanting were also joined to the words by the Masorites. It would be too much to expect unanimity of opinion in an undertaking of this nature; numerous infinitesimal details were disputed between the two conflicting groups in the Tiberias school as well as between the two schools in Babylonia. Until the beginning of the tenth century, these activities of the Masorites continued.

All along, Rabbinic Judaism held sway. Poetry and grammar were its auxiliaries. The Talmud was its authority and the Geonim its interpreters. To facilitate the application of the Talmudic Law, the necessity was soon recognized of arranging it into a convenient digest, eliminating the cumbersome, extraneous material. Otherwise, one would have to

wade through dozens of pages of irrelevant discourse to reach the nucleus of information he desired. The first digest was codified by (blind) Yehudai Gaon at about 760, and it was later revised and re-edited, at about 900, by Simeon Kayyara.

The value of such a compendium is indicated by the fact that despite the many countries to which the Jews had migrated, despite the contacts with Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Mohammedanism, despite the divergence of attitudes amongst Jews themselves, the Judaism of the Mishnah and Talmud retained its supremacy throughout the years. If there were disagreements, they were altogether individual and remained inarticulate.

## 20. THE FIRST THREAT TO RABBINIC JUDAISM : RISE OF KARAISM

THEN the first serious threat to Rabbinic Judaism appeared on the clear horizon. As wisps of mist are blown together into threatening clouds by a stiff wind, so the Arabic conquests, which like a gale swept over the Near East, whipped into small groups the heterodox elements of the various religions which lay in the path of Islam.

Where Mesopotamia joins onto Persia, the sectarian clouds of Judaism were gathering. There, towards the end of the seventh century, a tailor, Abu Isa by name, regarded himself as a forerunner of the Messiah. Word spread that by divine inspiration he had written great books. In his message, he adhered to the rabbinic laws of prayer, but insisted on seven times of prayer daily instead of the usual three. Jesus and Mohammed he regarded as true prophets, enjoining his followers to read the Gospels and the Koran. The eating of meat and the drinking of wine he prohibited. It is said that he gathered ten thousand followers and that while fighting the Persian army he marked out a circle about the camp, within which he assured his men they would remain unharmed; lo and behold! the enemy approached the circle and the wizardry frightened them off. But when Abu Isa pursued

them to the wilderness he met his death. His followers scattered and the last remnant died out in the tenth century.

Abu Isa's immediate disciple in Persia, Yudghan, also assumed the rôle of a prophet and called himself the shepherd of the nation. In addition to prohibiting the eating of meat, he indulged in much fasting. It was his opinion that the Sabbath and Festivals should not be adhered to as in Biblical times but held only as symbols. Ultimately, when brought in conflict with the authorities, he met his death together with his nineteen disciples.

The sectarian stirrings in Judaism materialized into something more permanent in the second half of the eighth century under the leadership of Anan ben David. In Persia, where he lived for a time, Anan became attracted to the heterodox opinions then in the air, and that seems to have militated against his appointment to the exilarchate, after his return to Babylonia. His younger and less scholarly—but safely orthodox—brother was chosen instead. Thereupon Anan declared himself the opposition exilarch and this act, tantamount to rebellion against the caliph, landed him in prison to await the death sentence. There, in prison, Anan met good company, none less than Abu Hanifa, founder of the great Mohammedan system of casuistry. This prominent Arab lawyer advised Anan to name himself head of a new sect in Judaism. To establish a new sect would be a fairly simple matter: it but required some knowledge of the uncertain and ambiguous commands of the Pentateuch; these could then be interpreted contrary to the rabbinic interpretation. Presto, a new sect! Then—so went the advice—after having greased the wheels of justice with a respectable bribe, when the trial came Anan could maintain that his brother had been appointed the head of two religions, not one; therefore his own claim to be acknowledged exilarch, for his own sect. At the trial, Anan proved himself an apt pupil of an able teacher. In addition to insisting upon the independence of his sect, he displayed a high regard for Mohammed and Islam (that did not hurt any); in the end, he who was to have died left prison a favored friend of the caliph.

To establish his new sect Anan opened with the protest that the rabbis had built a structure of Judaism which was entirely a castle in the air, without any solid foundation in the Bible. In his Book of Precepts (Sefer ha-Mizwot) he laid down a new structure which he considered firmly grounded in the Bible. But in doing so he clung pathetically to the lead of the rabbis. An authority on Karaism (A. Harkavy, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, p. 554) \* states the case well when he writes that "Anan's relationship to the rabbinical or traditional legislation may be compared to that of a traveller in an unknown region who, though he desires to separate from his guide, realizes that he is not able to find the way by himself, and is thus compelled to follow his leader, to keep his eyes riveted on his footprints, and at the same time to select parallel paths and side-lanes in order to maintain the appearance of independence."

With certain modifications, Anan did indeed follow the language, style and hermeneutic rules of Bible interpretation as found in the Talmud. While refusing to recognize tradition as a source of religious obligation, refusing even to recognize the agreement of majority opinion as authoritative, he did resort to the Biblical text for the support of his doctrines, even if obliged to force the text. Such deduction from the Bible he derived through the analogy of words or even letters — which was the old, established rabbinic method.

To introduce an element of newness and difference Anan polished up the moldy and discarded bits which remained as vestiges from the Sadducees and Essenes of old. The more rigid observance of the Sabbath he took from the Sadducees, in which the burning of any lights or fire is prohibited, making it necessary to spend Friday evening in darkness, and impossible to have any warm food on the Sabbath; travel to the extent of leaving the house is forbidden, unless it be for prayer or necessity. Like them, too, he opposed a fixed calendar, favoring lunar observation by which to arrange the seasons of the religious year. Like them and like the Christians he advocated that the Pentecost Festival should always be ob-

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served on a Sunday. In the forms of worship he attempted an imitation of the Service of the Temple, discarding the rabbinic liturgy and restricting prayer to the Psalms and other Biblical portions; he would have the Torah read daily, and a half-yearly cycle for the synagogue recital of the complete Torah.

Seeking to unite to himself the heterogeneous groups opposed to Rabbinic Judaism, Anan borrowed teachings from the body of lore of Abu Isa and Yudghan; for example, the refusal to eat any meat but that of the deer and the dove as a sign of mourning for the demolition of the Jerusalem Temple. Again, to please the residue of Abu Isa's and Yudghan's following, and also the Christians and Moslems, he looked favorably upon Jesus and Mohammed as great prophets for their respective religions.

From Abu Hanifa, his friend in time of need, Anan learned more than how to avoid a prison term. From him he learned to use the words of the Bible for symbolical meaning, a method which he applied widely to adduce Biblical support for his own teachings. From him, or from the one-time Hellenists, Anan took over the belief of the transmigration of the soul.

Throughout, Anan interpreted Judaism much more stringently than did the rabbis. For instance, he had no use for human physicians or for human medicine. In the rules of clean and unclean, of Sabbath and Festival observance, of the slaughtering of animals, of the practice of circumcision, of the marriage and ceremonial laws, he insisted on greater strictness than did the rabbis. These exacting restraints, bordering on asceticism, may be explained by his recourse to the old teachings of the Sadducees and Essenes, and by the lesson which the rapid disappearance of the *liberal* sects of Abu Isa and Yudghan conveyed to his mind. The effect was just the opposite of what he may have intended. Before long it was discovered that such rigid standards could not be maintained in practical life, so that those who insisted on adhering to them had perforce to isolate themselves and become a sect of hermits, somewhat as the Essenes had done. These extremist Ananites made for Palestine during the ninth century. As "mourners of Zion" they settled in Jerusalem to fast and pray,

to try to live the impossible ascetic life. Impossible it was, for the tenth century saw the entire disappearance of the band of extremist Ananites.

The bulk of Anan's followers were brought to a more moderate position, a saner and more enduring position, by Benjamin ben Moses Nahawendi. Teaching in the first half of the ninth century, Benjamin while not voicing his disapproval of Anan did move a great distance away from the latter's interpretations. In some regards he moved closer to the rabbis, adopting some of their ordinances—though not imposing them upon his followers—such as a more lenient interpretation of the Sabbath which allowed a certain amount of travel, and other concessions which Anan had opposed. But in the fundamental principle he agreed with Anan, that Scripture be resorted to and searched for guidance in the religious life. He would not clamp one down to the authorities but advocated loyalty to those convictions which result from a penetrating inquiry into the original text. That being the goal, the sect now acquired a designation descriptive thereof. Karaites means Scripturists, or "men of the text." Hence, Karaism is the name of the movement which began with Anan and flourished from the eighth to the twelfth century, continuing in a weakened form thereafter.

Benjamin Nahawendi included in his theology the idea that it was an angel of God that created the world and revealed the Law: mark the resemblance to Philo's Logos—perhaps Benjamin too derived the thought from the Hellenist philosophy. The soul seemed to him part of the body and perishable with it. A good deal of his intellectual energy he spent allegorizing passages in the Bible, and in this way he introduced considerable moderation in the application of the Biblical laws.

If Benjamin opposed Anan, the founder of the sect, he was at least delicate about it. A more bitter and more decided opposition, however, was directed by a later contemporary of his, Ishmael of Akbara. Though a Karaite, Ishmael rather bluntly dubbed Anan as asinine. Was this a case of the pot calling the kettle black? This gratuitous insult must



have come as a reward to Anan's principle, "Search thoroughly in the Torah and do not rely on my opinion." Though liberating, such freedom would lead to a good deal of confusion and diversity of opinion. Indeed, the main agreement of the Karaite teachers, especially in the ninth century, was the agreement to differ with Anan. Inevitably, many subdivisions of Karaism arose; one was that begun by Ishmael of Akbara. It is illuminating, incidentally, to know that Ishmael observed that errors had slipped into the Hebrew text of Scripture and that in some instances it was therefore preferable to refer to the Septuagint translation and the Samaritan text—for this is a conclusion of the modern science of Biblical criticism.

A disciple of Benjamin, Daniel ben Moses al-Kumisi, was the leading Karaite at the end of the ninth century. He too saw the error of Anan and his extremist followers. Whereas he had first spoken of Anan as Chief of the Sages he later came to refer to him as Chief of the Fools. Following the Karaite precedent of freedom of thought, he differed from his teacher Benjamin by refusing to regard speculation as religious authority and refusing to resort to allegorical interpretations of Biblical Law. The simple sense of the word of Scripture, the natural meaning, was for him the criterion. He opposed Benjamin, again, in denying the physical existence of angels, insisting that when they are mentioned in the Bible they are meant to refer to forces of nature by which God operates. He is in line with Karaism in deciding upon stricter interpretation of the Law, forbidding any work on the Sabbath even if done by a non-Jew, forbidding the burning of lights on the evenings of Festivals, forbidding the eating of those animals which of old had been utilized for Temple sacrifices. With Anan he agreed in the former's understanding of the levirate marriage. Daniel would not allow the new moon to be determined by calculation, for such calculation he condemned as astrology. The New Year he would observe, not as was done, on the first of the month of Tishri, but on the tenth day of the month, which was really the Day

of Atonement. No responsibility would he impose for the observance of the precepts of the commandments until the twentieth year, not the thirteenth year. Serious departures indeed these were from the rabbinic religion.

A remarkable Jewish radical of this unsettled period can be classed as neither rabbinite nor Karaite. Neither of these attacked the Bible ; the point of their disagreement was mainly with regard to the authority of the Talmudic interpretation of the Bible — the Bible itself, though, remained inviolate as the ultimate source of truth. But Hiwi al-Balkhi, the unclassifiable radical, assembled two hundred items of criticism against Scripture. His book created quite a stir, inducing school teachers to use an expurgated Bible in which the passages to which he objected were missing. Although his work was refuted and suppressed some fifty or sixty years afterwards, Hiwi did strike out by projecting questions in the ninth century which still protrude in modern thought, questions such as why man should sin at all, or why man should be mortal.

Karaism, the growing sectarian movement in Judaism, was now entering the heyday of its development. Its ramifications were spreading. The time had arrived for a historian to survey the field. He came in the person of Abu Yusuf al-Kirkisani, whose activities lie in the first half of the tenth century. His survey of Karaism is critical, tracing the Jewish sects from the Samaritans right through to Daniel al-Kumisi. While admiring Anan and frequently defending him, al-Kirkisani does not agree with the severity of his legal interpretations. Beside being a historian, al-Kirkisani is noteworthy as the first Karaite author to advocate the guidance of common sense in matters of religion. In investigation he insists upon subjecting the proofs to the test of reason. Thus resorting to reason and philosophy, he took over without modification the views of the Mohammedan philosophers. Later on, though, this tendency led to a split in Karaism between those who would continue in the way of al-Kirkisani and the more orthodox who would shun philosophy.

## 21. RATIONALISM DEFEATS KARAISM AND ENTERS JUDAISM

THE roots of Karaism were reaching deeper and wider into Jewish life. During the ninth century they had reached into Babylonia, Palestine, Syria, Persia, Egypt. The menace to the unified normal Judaism of these many centuries was becoming formidable.

At first, the rabbinic leaders, the Geonim, had been unaware of the growing menace. Then, with the aid of the exilarch who could impose restrictive measures, they endeavored to quash Karaism; that but strengthened the Karaites, spreading them over a larger area. The exilarch soon lost a good deal of his power. Because of a dispute between two rival candidates for the office, one of whom was a Karaite, the controlling caliph arbitrated that any group of ten people — whether they be Jews, Christians, or Magians — have the right to elect their own religious head; such a decision, while tolerant, would tend to undermine the communal organization and to encourage religious unrest and a splitting up of Judaism. With the weakening of the exilarchate, it was imperative for the Geonim to fire their own bullets. It was best that the fight within the Jewish religion be transferred from political to religious and intellectual grounds. It was both wrong and undesirable for Judaism to commandeer a fashion of unity by means of the excommunicative ban. The obligation rested upon the Geonim to *convince* the dissentient Jews that their allegiance belonged to Rabbinic Judaism which was the proper Judaism.

But the Geonim were not sufficiently equipped to do this. One of the most scholarly of them, Hai ben David, who served at the end of the ninth century as Gaon of the Pumbeditha academy when it was removed to Bagdad, the flourishing capital, translated Anan's "Book of Precepts" from Aramaic into Arabic (or Hebrew), probably in order to refute it, but that did no discernible damage to the Karaites. The Geonim could not hope on their own self-appointed ground to gain a victory over Karaism. The Karaites did not recognize the validity of Talmudic Judaism: any arguments based on state-

ments with the Talmud as authority could not possibly carry weight with anti-Talmudists. But this was the only Judaism the Geonim knew, and even in the Talmud many of them did not distinguish between that which is authoritative legally and that which is wholly legendary or homiletically fanciful. Of secular subjects and philosophical arguments they were in blissful ignorance. It was on these grounds, however, that the battle would have to be carried on.

Within the Karaite schism, with all those in fact who were waiting to rebel against the authority of the rabbis, theological and philosophical speculations were becoming increasingly important in the tenth and subsequent centuries. The influence was largely Arabic. In Islam, during the second half of the eighth century, the orthodox school which adhered to the literal understanding of the Koran and its traditional interpretation — which included a belief in fatalistic predestination and in divine anthropomorphisms — was opposed by the rationalistic school which would modify fatalism and eliminate anthropomorphisms; these Arab rationalists were called *Mutazila* ("separatists"), and because they ventured to subject to analytic discussion the basic principle (*kalam*) of the Koran they were also called *Mutakallimun* — Kalamists, for short. Borrowing the doctrines of Leucippus and Democritus and other Greek philosophers of old, the Kalamists insisted on using reason as a means of arriving at theological knowledge. To the Koran which they looked upon as the revelation of truth they wanted to add their own careful observation and speculation in the search of truth and in the understanding of the Koran.

From the Kalamists the Karaites took much of their ammunition. To put up a convincing fight against the Karaites the rabbinic defenders had to use the same ammunition; they were obliged to defend traditional Judaism with the philosophic arguments of the Kalamists.

Who was there to lead in battle? No one in the schools of Babylonia nor in the sacred villages of Palestine was equal to it. Reports were arriving of a lively youth of great erudition holding forth in upper Egypt, in a place known as the Fayum.

This youth, Saadia, knew his Jewish subjects remarkably well and he knew the Arabic language with its Mohammedan culture equally well. He knew Karaism too and he knew that he was opposed to it. When only twenty-three years of age he launched out into a red-blooded literary attack on the teachings of Anan. The row he started won him a hearty send-off — good riddance — that same year, when he had decided to travel to Palestine.

In the Holy Land, Saadia participated in a dispute of another sort. The Gaon of a Palestinian academy insisted on reserving for Palestine the time-honored right of declaring the day for the observance of the New Year, and the day he designated differed from that decided upon by the Babylonian authorities: thus he exposed to the danger of internal division the Rabbinic Judaism which was already weakened by Karaism. Saadia saved the situation, successfully arguing the Babylonian position in this complicated matter in his devastatingly learned "Book of Festival Seasons."

Saadia proved himself the man of the hour. Here was a sorely needed leader for the campaign against Karaism. The Babylonian academy at Sura had fallen low; there was talk of disbanding it; a vacancy occurred through the death of its Gaon. Here was an opportunity to place Saadia in a commanding position. "It is true that Saadia excels in wisdom, piety, and eloquence; but he is firm and unbending, of a combative disposition, and when he has made up his mind he will recoil before none," — in these words a religious leader of that day sought to discourage Saadia's appointment in favor of a rival for the Gaonic post. That was sufficient recommendation for the exilarch to choose Saadia. A Gaon with a "combative disposition" was in that emergency like a gift from heaven. It meant breaking a long-established precedent when the exilarch elected for Gaon of Sura one who was not a native of the land, but Saadia upset other precedents as well.

Two years after his appointment, Saadia proved himself true to his recommendation: unbending. The exilarch had decided in favor of a litigant in a lawsuit involving an extensive inheritance. In accordance with custom, the Gaon of the

Pumbeditha academy ratified the decision. But Saadia, knowing that the exilarch would benefit financially from the decision, refused to ratify it. No amount of cajolery or coercion would make him. An open conflict resulted; the exilarch deposed him from his post. Saadia with his integrity retired to Bagdad and there he did his best work. Seven years later the quarrel was patched up and Saadia returned to Sura as Gaon. But five years afterward—in 942, at the age of sixty—he died, having exhausted himself. To the school of Sura he gave a new spurt of life, and had he not been retired for the seven years he may well have restored it to its erstwhile glory.

His attack on Karaism, from the beginning to the end of his career, proved Saadia's greatest immediate achievement. True, he had tried his talent at liturgical poetry, and had even composed a rhyming Hebrew dictionary for writers of verse, but his verse failed to rise above an artificial, even if skilful, manipulation of words; he had composed a book of prayer, with an Arabic addition of liturgical comment, but it did not gain extensive use. Saadia's real importance lies in his resounding victory over the Karaites. Their philosophical methods he converted into a boomerang, using them as he did to justify the traditional development of Judaism.

Saadia's *opus magnum*, "Beliefs and Opinions," written originally in Arabic and translated into Hebrew (Emunot we-Deot) two centuries later, blazed a new trail. Making use of the Kalamist methods and doctrines, Saadia set out to establish on the basis of reason, experience, and the perception of the senses, those religious truths which believers accepted entirely through the revelation recorded in Scripture. It was his aim, as he states expressly in the introduction, to put an end to the religious confusion then prevalent and the blunders then hailed as new-found doctrines. His philosophic reasoning, as he pursues it in the book, leads him to the understanding of a world created by God *ex nihilo*. If God is creator, then it follows that He possesses life, power, and knowledge. These are His attributes. Opposing the doctrine of the Trinity, Saadia emphasizes the absolute unity of God as well

as His spiritual character. The highest life is to be lived in obedience to the life which was divinely revealed in Scripture: some of the commands are possible for man to understand by his reason and others must be obeyed solely because they are divinely revealed, although they too can be explained on rational grounds. The omnipotent and omniscient God has given man free-will to choose to obey these laws. The soul is distinctly related to man and it undergoes no transmigration, but there is, according not only to the Bible but on the basis of reason and natural law, the resurrection of the dead. Right through, Saadia combines reason and revelation in a search for truth, justifying traditional Judaism on a philosophic basis. God gave us both — reason as well as revelation. Thus, in a real sense, he established the foundation of the Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages.

In the attempt to confirm the Bible rationally it becomes necessary to scrutinize all the more closely the precise meaning of Biblical passages and even words. Differences in tense might change the meaning. One sentence when wrenched from its position in the entire chapter and interpreted as an isolated specimen might yield a fantastic conclusion. Therefore it was recognized as essential to know the Hebrew scientifically, that it was not enough to give a loose translation. To know its grammatic subtleties was paramount. These requisites prompted Saadia to undertake a detailed study of Hebrew grammar. Publishing the results of his investigation, he became the first *scientific* grammarian of the Hebrew language and his rules and methods of inquiry were closely followed by subsequent grammarians. His approach to a scientific knowledge of the Hebrew language combined with the deliberate ideal of rational investigation gives Saadia a special position of originality in the field of Bible exegesis; this is patent in his comprehensive commentary to one half of the Pentateuch and to other Biblical Books, including Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job.

He found time to translate the Bible into Arabic — the authoritative translation in that language, even as the Septuagint had become the classic Greek translation; at the same time,

the Arabic translation could be referred to by the general run of Jews as a key to the understanding of the Arabic language, giving access to the expanding Arabic culture.

Also in the realm of purely Halakic scholarship, in the well traversed road of Talmudic legalism, Saadia stands out as an innovator. For the first time in Judaism, he made a systematic arrangement of the vast material, dividing into categories of subject matter all the Biblical commandments: this material he then presented methodically, arguing its validity on the basis of the Bible, then on the strength of the Talmud, and finally, as confirmation, according to the demands of reason.

Scientific method, philosophic agility, Talmudic scholarship, unsparing energy and polemic courage — combined in the one person Saadia — landed upon Karaism a staggering blow which shocked the sect into a desperate determination to retaliate. Grammarians and lexicographers riveted their eyes to the Bible, exegetes dug into the Bible for their ammunition, codifiers arranged and rearranged the laws of Karaism, scholarly warriors hurled their slanderous missiles at Saadia. This constituted the Karaite counter-attack, and for it the ranks of the Karaites were well-equipped during the tenth, eleventh and into the twelfth centuries. In the end they lost out. Saadia had discovered the vulnerable spots of Karaism; he had shown the defenders of traditional Judaism by his example how best to wage the battle, and now his example was followed.

The spokesmen of Rabbinic Judaism concentrated on the precise syntactical understanding of the Bible; they pursued a systematic study of the Talmud; they acquainted themselves with the currents of philosophic thought. By the second half of the twelfth century the greatest philosopher of medieval Jewry arose and he, Moses Maimonides, wielded all the powers of his scholarship in defense of Rabbinic Judaism. It was he who completed the victory of Saadia. Unlike Saadia, Maimonides was tolerant to the Karaites. He could afford to be. So thoroughly and all-encompassingly did he combine the Jewish religion with the philosophy of his day that he left no quarter for the Karaite thinkers.



From then on, the intellectual side of Karaism was on the downgrade. The Karaites in the Near East — those who did not merge with Islam — rejoined the main body of Jews, and whatever Karaism remained lingered on in Europe, where it had planted itself during the second half of the eleventh century. After a brief and unsuccessful attempt to put up in Spain, the Karaites made their way into Turkey, southern Russia and Lithuania. In Russia they survived as an innocuous sect. There, in the nineteenth century, when Jews were plagued with persecution, the Karaites sought to spare themselves this pain by disassociating themselves from the Jews. With the aid of documents forged by Abraham Firkovich, one of their scholars, they persuaded the political authorities that they had resided in Russia since the seventh century B.C.E. and that they had taken no part in the crucifixion of Jesus. Thus having cleared themselves, they were awarded full civil liberty in Russia, while the rest of Jewry continued to suffer. But the number of Karaites went on dwindling.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were ten thousand of them in Russia and two thousand in the other countries of the world. Since then, with the advent of Communism in Russia, who knows but that only a handful of Karaites linger on as a pitiful reminder of the hundreds of thousands who at one time menaced the unity and supremacy of Rabbinic Judaism?

## 22. DECLINE IN BABYLONIA AND REVIVAL IN SPAIN

THE stimulus required to subdue Karaism generated a spurt of activity which brought a healthy virility to the growing body of Judaism.

It was not in Babylonia, however, that the spurt came. The Babylonian academies were now on the decline. That was evident in the case of Saadia: he had received his training in Egypt; it had been necessary to import an outsider to put some life into the Sura academy. After Saadia's death, the school at Sura closed until 987; it reopened until 1040, when, after a total existence of eight hundred years, it closed

forever. The Pumbeditha school was more fortunate. Having been transferred to Bagdad, the capital, it managed to continue with long interruptions, until the end of the thirteenth century.

The last of the Pumbeditha Geonim of any importance were Sherira, gracing that exalted position from 968 to 1006, and his son Hai, who continued the leadership to 1038. Both of these received and answered more questions on rabbinic Law than any other of the Geonim. Sherira was quite liberal, and in his replies instructed the people not to accept Haggadic statements of Jewish tradition—that is, flights of oratorical fancy or just casual remarks—unless they accorded with common sense and the Bible; Sherira deserves mention also for one of his Responsa in which he traced the history of the continued Jewish tradition, through the Talmud to his own day. His son, Hai Gaon, stressed the new emphasis on grammar, poetry, and lucidity in Talmud interpretation; he codified the civil law of the Talmud; he gave authority to a ruling that where differences are to be found between the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmud, the preference goes to the former.

A break in the activity of Babylonia was brought about by the economic distress consequent upon political disorders in the eastern caliphate. Then in 1055 the conquering Seljuks took Bagdad.

Where conditions were more favorable, new centers of learning had arisen. Under the Fatimite dynasty in North Africa, and in Egypt, there was a moderate opportunity for intellectual expansion. Particularly in Kairawan: there, early in the eleventh century, Hananel followed Saadia's lead in using reason, the Bible and the Talmud as sources of truth, in seeking the simple and direct meaning of the Bible, in taking a rational view of the Haggadah. His commentary on the Talmud follows a connected pattern, explaining the text concurrently, probably the first time it was done in this manner, but a method which gained subsequently in usage; this facilitated the study of the Talmud as one went on from passage to passage. Not much more merits mention in the period of activity in Kairawan. A new ruling that none but

a Moslem may enter that holy city served to terminate the encouraging but short-lived activity.

The new spirit in Judaism found its golden opportunity to flourish in Spain during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

Spain, which Jews identified with the Biblical name Sepharad, had become the home of small numbers of Jewish traders as early as the first century of the Common Era. Laws enacted against them during the seventh century with regard to the Mishnah and the Midrashim evidence the presence of these volumes in their midst as guides in the religious life. The turning point came with the coming of the Arabs and Berbers in 711. Burdens imposed by the Visigothic kings and the fanatic priests were thereupon removed. A boon of great consequence this was, allowing Judaism freedom of study and growth. At first, Spanish Jews, lacking authorities of their own, established close connections with the Babylonian academies from whom they sought guidance in the religious life. In the second half of the ninth century they requested Amram, Gaon of Sura, to send them a complete prayerbook. The prayer Service which Gaon Amram forwarded was taken as basic for the ritual of the Spanish (Sephardic) Jews; as it developed, the ritual came to differ in certain regards from the prayerbook which grew out of the experiences of the German and French (Ashkenazic) Jews.

Along in the tenth century, amidst the sunny culture and liberal atmosphere of Spain under Mohammedan rule, Jewish learning thrived. Under the patronage of the caliphs, Arabic culture reached its zenith. Cordova, the capital, became the seat of erudition. Arts and sciences were cultivated with devotion. Philosophers and poets were honored. Seventeen great universities and seventy useful libraries nourished the needs of culture. Surroundings so stimulating must perforce encourage torch-bearers of Judaism to show their talents. All that was needed was someone to start the ball rolling, and that prerequisite found fulfillment in the person of Hasdai ibn Shaprut. Officially a physician at court and Inspector

General of Customs, his knowledge of Latin and other languages won him diplomatic triumphs and in time placed him in a position under two caliphs equivalent to Foreign Minister. In this exalted rank Hasdai became not only protector of the Jews, but patron of their culture, surrounding himself with rabbis, thinkers, poets.

In the evolution of Judaism, it is illuminating to appreciate the contribution made by the laymen of means and power, whose good offices made it possible for the light of religion to shine out the more brilliantly. Hasdai ibn Shaprut is the illustration *par excellence*.

### 23. WHEN GRAMMAR DECIDED RELIGIOUS ISSUES

UNDER Hasdai's patronage, Hebrew philology received attention. His own literary secretary, Menahem ben Saruk, composed the first complete dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, in which the words were systematically arranged according to their root-formation. Its goal was the better understanding of Scripture; it was therefore written in Hebrew, and for illustration it restricted itself to quotations from Scripture, disregarding the cognate languages. Immediately the book gained lasting popularity, even in countries not as cultured as Spain. Had he not limited himself to Hebrew citations, but made additional reference to cognate languages—to Arabic or Aramaic, for instance—for purposes of comparison and clarification, the dictionary would have had greater scientific value. Moreover, Menahem wrongly assumed that the Hebrew words were based on two-letter roots, and this erroneous theory led him into countless difficulties, since some words seemed to have only one root-letter, and others as many as five root-letters.

These deficiencies were severely criticized by Dunash ibn Labrat, who had studied under Saadia and had criticized also his teacher's philology. Dunash urged the need of studying Arabic and Aramaic and of consulting the Aramaic translation of the Bible, the better to understand the Hebrew. On

two hundred points he refuted Menahem and in most of them, though not in all, he was justified. His criticism was ruthless. Personal honor as well as scholarship—are they ever separable?—were at stake. Luckless Menahem fell in Hasdai's esteem; he lost the latter's support; he was accused of being a Karaite; he was driven from his house and even attacked by underlings. Amazing what potency there is in grammar!

The dictionary dispute was carried on to some extent in verse. Dunash was the first to introduce meter in the poetry of Spanish Jewry. He adapted the meter of the Arabs. Out of these beginnings there developed in Hebrew poetry forty kinds of meter. "In the days of Hasdai they began to chirp," remains history's testimonial to this odd introduction of Jewish poetry in Spain—the battle of grammar turned poetic. For one thing, poetry thus introduced was sure to become flexible. The disciples of Menahem and of Dunash continued the battle of grammar, to which was added the new dispute as to whether meter should be allowed in Hebrew verse. What was the outcome? A disciple of Menahem discovered the true basis of Hebrew grammar, that three letters are normal in the root-formation; also, the use of meter introduced by Dunash became an important element of Hebrew poetry.

Poetry, thus revived, was not to be pursued independently. It was to embellish Jewish life. Grammar was to clarify it. The Talmud, however, was still central. Its contents, Rabbinic Judaism, ordained and taught the Jewish life. Poetry and grammar were ancillary to it. Aware of this central position of the Talmud, Hasdai invited the Babylonian scholar, Moses ben Enoch, to found a school at Cordova for the deeper and more searching study of the Talmud, and he purchased from Sura accurate copies of the Talmud. The caliph welcomed this move because now Spanish Jewry would no longer be dependent on the Babylonian Geonim: he had political reason for satisfaction. Whatever the caliph's motive, to Judaism it was an act of providence. At the disintegration of the Babylonian academies, Talmudic scholarship

did not remain orphaned. It was given a good home in Spain and from Spain it reached out into all the Jewish communities of Europe.

Talmudic learning found a friendly welcome in France and Germany, especially in the cities along the Rhine, beginning with the second half of the tenth century, when the Jewish communities had benefited by the law and order restored through the strong rule of the Saxon dynasty. Famous for his school at Mayence was Rabbenu Gershom ben Judah. From Italy, France, and Germany he attracted students. Together they studied the text of the Talmud, seeking unsparingly to fix a correct version and to find the simplest and clearest interpretation.

Noteworthy is Gershom's initiative in the matter of adjusting Judaism to the exigencies of his day, yet not breaking with the continuity of tradition. No matter how closely one wanted to live in accordance with the Talmud, conditions in new countries of Jewish habitation, far removed in spirit and distance from the countries in which the Talmud took shape, necessitated some modification. Modification in the form of a new decree, called a Takkanah, could be made only by those in authority; it had to accord with the spirit of official Judaism and to find justification in the Bible and Talmud. (An early instance of such alteration in the law was to be found in Hillel's institution of the Prosbul.) Until the time of Rabbenu Gershom the Jewish law allowed polygamy, the accepted custom in Arab countries, although Jews rarely practiced it. Jewish family life was moral to an exemplary degree. Still, in western Europe, in a Christian environment, polygamy was out of place, even if it existed only in writing. Therefore Gershom, with the consent of a synod, enacted a decree prohibiting polygamy. The decree was originally intended for his own community, but—and this is a good example of how Judaism continued to grow almost imperceptibly even when all efforts were bent to maintain the *status quo*—it was accepted one by one by the other communities of Europe.

Another decree of Rabbenu Gershom prohibited the divorc-

ing of a woman against her consent, although at a later date further changes were made in the law. One of his rulings forbade persons to tamper with letters not addressed to them; this was calculated to prevent the bribing of messengers who might reveal business secrets. When converts to Christianity, who had been forced to their baptism by a temporary persecution, sought to return to Judaism, some of the unthinking Jews would taunt them: this led Rabbenu Gershom to threaten with excommunication anyone who did so. In addition to all that, Rabbenu Gershom was also deeply concerned with the accuracy of the Bible texts and with the interpretation of the Bible. The school which he established hummed with activity for the greater part of a century.

Like the peoples among whom they dwelt and with whom they associated on tolerable terms, the Jews of France during the eleventh century were pious and devout. Unorthodoxy was rare. None of the secular sciences was studied and therefore the Jews of northern France produced none of the philosophy which played so large a part among the Jews living in Islamic Spain. Religion and learning were synonymous for French Jewry. Their poetic efforts were few, restricted to the prayerbook. Their main attention was focused on the Bible and Talmud, to supply clear and simple commentaries explaining these sources of Judaism. Exegesis for them was not just a study; it was a key to Scripture, to the more accurate knowledge of the life God wanted them to live.

There was a pronounced contrast between the exegesis of France and that of Spain. Philology was all important in Spain, to ascertain the specific meaning of words, the "peshat"; the philosophical activity in Spain rendered much of the Bible a book of allegory, introducing thoughts into the Bible that were probably never intended; the desire for an Arabic commentary was a causative factor in the exegetic study. Quite different was the exegesis of France. The faulty grammar of Menahem and Dunash was all the French scholars knew; they knew not the corrections made by the disciples of these two. Still they were able to penetrate into

the meaning of their texts by using their eyes to observe the life going on about them and not eternally losing themselves in tomes of speculation, failing to see life in reality as though blinders were affixed. The exegetes of France called upon their experiences to explain the Bible. Did not the Bible come into being as a record of human experiences and therefore should not sound insight into human nature go a long way in understanding it? This homely aspect of French exegesis made it the more popular.

The rise of French exegesis culminated in Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1105), better known as Rashi—the Hebraic abbreviation of his name. Earning his living at the wine trade in the province of Champagne, Rashi served without remuneration as Rabbi of Troyes. Here he founded a school whose halls echoed with the babble of study for the thirty-five remaining years of his life. Rashi's eternal fame in the annals of Judaism he earned by his two commentaries, one on the Bible and one on the Talmud. The commentary on the Bible is continuous, following each verse in the sequence of the Biblical Books. Troublesome days toward the end of his life prevented him from completing his work on the last Books of the Bible—Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles—and these were completed by his school.

In explaining the text Rashi steered a middle course between a precise definition and a more fanciful explanation, veering somewhat toward the fanciful, enough to lend charm and interest. It does seem that towards the end of his life his grandson convinced him of the greater value in a commentary which adhered more closely to the specific literal meaning. Rashi made use of grammar, of course, in arriving at a precision of meaning, especially when the meaning of the word or verse involved a religious issue. His grammar at times was faulty; yet through a natural feeling for the language he hit upon the real significance as though by instinct. Obscure terms he clarified by quoting the equivalent word in the French language of his day. Not a little of the charm lies in the succinct and pointed style which reflects the frank nature of his own character. What Rashi him-



self did not understand he did not try to explain, refusing to resort to a barrage of words to conceal ignorance. The commentary on the Pentateuch received the widest use and to this day no child trained in the lore of traditional Judaism can claim a proper understanding of the Pentateuch without a knowledge of Rashi's commentary. It is the most popular commentary and the best known.

Great as is the commentary on the Bible, Rashi's commentary on the Talmud is even greater—so great that Rashi won the acclaim: "The greatest of the commentators, enlightening the eyes of the diaspora." He deserved the title. His Talmudic commentary outstripped all former efforts in the field. The Talmud is not an easy book to understand, cluttered as it is with technical terms, odd expressions, local references, involved labyrinths of speculation. All this Rashi made clear, removing at once hours of baffled searching. And he did it with unbelievable brevity—scarcely a superfluous word is to be found. That is important, not to complicate what is already complicated. Some sections he revised three times, so careful was he to achieve perfection. Yet within the confines of brevity he had room for all the traditions there were of, and about, the Talmud. Without Rashi's commentary the Talmud would have remained unknown to any but the most persevering scholars. In copies of the Talmud, therefore, his commentary is read concurrently with the text. Even then there remains sufficient difficulty to tantalize the mind.

Rashi's high standard was successfully maintained by his school. Important compositions, attributed to Rashi, emanate from his disciples. Two books of Responsa and legal decisions are among these; an outstanding work on the prayers of the synagogue, *Mahzor Vitry*, and also a book giving decisions with regard to liturgy; a review of the Responsa and the decisions of the earlier scholars.

The beautiful sequel to Rashi's scholarship is the fact that his own children were his best disciples. His three learned daughters (he had no sons) married men of learning, and the grandchildren ran true to form. The greatest was Jacob—called Tam, the "perfect." They, the grandchildren, scruti-

nized the work of Rashi and supplemented it with their additions and corrections. This auxiliary commentary to the Talmud which they began and which was continued for some two hundred years is known as the Tosafot, the "Supplements." Likewise, Rashi's example in writing commentaries on the Bible was followed; the grandchildren, however, paid more attention to the literal meaning.

The Crusades came. The first, second and third Crusades, tramping through France and Germany, convinced that the plaguing of a Jew would secure atonement, they disgraced the very name of religion. They repressed and all but stifled Jewish creativeness in those lands.

#### 24. THE BROADENING OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

It is to Spain that we must turn to observe the further growth in the religion of the Jew. Although the Moslem caliphate was overthrown, and Cordova was sacked by the Berbers and the country broken up into many petty kingdoms, yet, Jews found a welcome in several of the principalities, early in the eleventh century.

In Granada, Samuel ha-Levi rose from a grocer's shop to the office of vizier, and he graced the rôle of patron in the manner of Hasdai ibn Shaprut. On his own he was no mean scholar: among his talents he could count the ability to write and speak seven languages, a knowledge of the Talmud, poetry, calligraphy and statecraft. To encourage study, he spent large sums for copyists to reproduce the Mishnah and Talmud and to distribute them among the poor students.

Solomon ibn Gabirol enjoyed for a time the patronage of Samuel. An astounding genius was ibn Gabirol. Orphaned early, and melancholy because of that, he exhibited a poetic nature of remarkable temperament. At the age of sixteen an appealing poem of his singled him out for greatness. Later generations who loved to embroider upon his achievements told many legends concerning him; one, about a competition at the caliph's court as to who could sing the best, the test being the willingness of a hungry horse to forego his food in

order to listen — Gabirol won. In keeping with the temperamental artist, ibn Gabirol was a restless spirit always wandering about, conceited, accusing others of stealing his verse, expressing himself all too frankly. But his talent condones his eccentricity. Think of him setting out at the age of nineteen to write a poem of four hundred strophes, giving all the rules of grammar, arranged in acrostic form. Imagine grammar taught through poetry! In the Arabic language he wrote an ethical work on "The Improvement of the Moral Quality," and also a gathering of epigrams. Primarily, though, he is known in the history of Judaism as the "nightingale of piety." Many of his *Piyyutim* found a place in the liturgy of the Spanish Jews, so true and so beautiful is the expression he gives to the longing of the soul. One poem, incidentally, enumerates all the six hundred and thirteen precepts of Rabbinic Judaism. Altogether he created a hundred and seventy-five religious, and one hundred and forty-six secular, poems. These he wrote by the age of thirty, when he died.

Had he lived longer, ibn Gabirol might have developed into as important a philosopher as he was a poet. His most sublime poem, "The Royal Crown," contains in essence his philosophy, which he penned more prosaically in the Arabic "Fountain of Life." The philosophy is chiefly neo-Platonic, combined with a strain of Jewish mysticism. Thus neo-Platonism follows chronologically the philosophy of the Kalamists and becomes the second contact of medieval Judaism with Greek thought.

Like the neo-Platonists, ibn Gabirol contemplates a transcendent God, beyond the powers of man to apprehend intellectually, an unknowable God. Only the rare individual may on some isolated occasion lose his individual consciousness and rise to a great ecstasy in which he merges for a moment with God. According to ibn Gabirol, the universe emanates from God, by stages, progressing from the pure to the impure, not that matter itself changes in the stages of its descent — and this is where he differs from the neo-Platonists — but that the impurity attaches itself because of the great distance the later

emanations have moved from the original source which is God, somewhat as a ray of light loses its brilliance as it moves away from the source.

So long as ibn Gabirol adhered to the poetic presentation of his philosophy it was acceptable: it did not differ greatly from the poetry of the Bible which speaks majestically of a transcendent God. But only a negligible influence on Jewish thought did the prose work exert. It was soon lost sight of. A century later, when it was translated into Latin (his name misspelt Avicbron, or something like that) the book of Jewish philosophy was unknowingly accepted as the work of a non-Jew and eagerly studied by the scholastics; the error was not discovered until 1846. History proves many things: in this odd case of mistaken identity, does it not prove the similarity in the personal problems of both Jew and Christian? The Jew sought to know God, and through his search many a Christian found God!

Very popular in Jewish circles was an ethical work by a later contemporary, Bahya ibn Pakuda. The fervid style and invigorating spirit of his "Duties of the Heart" met with a ready response and influenced profoundly the medieval Jewish understanding of piety. It distinguishes between the physical and ethical laws of Judaism, to show that ethical ideas underlie the physical laws. The first section deals with God's unity. That leads to a discussion of God's ethical requirements, which seem to be: piety of the heart rather than outward performance, piety with a touch of asceticism—which teaching bears some resemblance to the mystical tendencies of that Islamic milieu. Bahya's charming exposition of piety opened the floodgates of Jewish ethical literature.

In the broadening of Jewish scholarship the Talmud came in for its share. The legalists in Spain were gaining a reputation at home and abroad. It is an amusing coincidence that the five most prominent Talmudists bore the name Isaac. The greatest, Isaac al-Fasi, a native of Fez (northern Africa), made it his task to abbreviate the law-book for the Jewish life, the Talmud. The ordinary rabbi could not master it sufficiently to give guidance on a particular point the moment

he was asked for it, so vast was the Talmud. To simplify matters, al-Fasi omitted most of the fanciful (Haggadic) passages, also all the laws which were not applicable in his day, such as laws regarding Temple sacrifices. Of the laws that were binding, he contracted the discussions to include only that which was relevant, and without delay he led up to the Talmudic decisions, quoting in addition the decisions of the Geonim as well as his own. This became the first compendium of the Talmud. Now, when a question with regard to Judaistic practice arose, it was a simple matter to proceed directly to the authoritative decision as recorded in the digest of al-Fasi.

A further aid to the elucidation of the Talmud was given by Nathan of Italy, through the "Aruk," a complete dictionary of the whole range of the Hebrew and the Aramaic in the entire post-Biblical literature. This work remained supreme in its field right up to the nineteenth century.

The zenith of attainment in Spain came during the first half of the twelfth century. Both in Christian and Moslem sections of Spain the political position was still favorable. Patronage was no longer indispensable. A momentum of scholarly zeal had already been set in motion. The leading Talmudic scholars of the age were mostly disciples of al-Fasi. In addition to the Talmud, studies included philosophy, poetry, astronomy, the calendar, mathematics, medicine, philology, exegesis: yet they were all one, centered in Rabbinic Judaism, auxiliary to it, enriching it, deepening it. Religion was the hub. . . Has religion ever motivated a wider gamut of interests? Has religion ever attracted unto itself as luminous a galaxy?

One family in particular, the ibn Ezra family, contributed lavishly to the religious culture of that day. One of them, Moses, broke new ground as a literary critic, in his Arabic treatise, "Causeries and Notes." Disappointment in love drove him to verse. After the disconsolate lover had found some consolation, he turned his talents to religious poetry. He had the patience to labor over one poem running the length of one thousand two hundred and ten verses. Some

two hundred liturgical poems and three hundred secular ones came from his pen. Beauty of diction and sublimity of thought rank Moses ibn Ezra in the class of Solomon ibn Gabirol.

But the greatest lyricist of them all was Judah ha-Levi. He trained as a physician, he studied rabbinics under al-Fasi, he mastered Arabic, Spanish, and metaphysics. Essentially, though, he was a poet, bringing a variety of subjects—love and wine and friendship and nature—under the spell of his words. But the theme closest to his heart was his Judaism; in “silken speech” he articulated his devotion to it. His exaltation of the Jewish religion, his praises of the Torah and the joy in obeying its commands, his sympathetic appeal to the deepest emotions of the heart, matching the Psalms in genius, did much to infuse into the Jewish religion a throbbing reality, to prevent it from petrifying into a lifeless legalism, while at the same time keeping it from evaporating into a nebulous philosophic theory.

To show his dissatisfaction with philosophy, Judah ha-Levi wrote a philosophic book. He used the methods of philosophers, calling on the Aristotelian thought which had just been rediscovered and become the vogue. He dealt with the contents of philosophy—the nature of God, man and the universe—developing a philosophy of history. The sum total of that investigation was to condemn philosophy as totally unsatisfactory—attractive perhaps, as are the flowering trees, but bearing no fruit. This “Book of arguments and proofs of the despised religion” (written in Arabic) he titled “The Cuzari.” He knew of the extraordinary occurrence in southern Russia, brought to light by Hasdai ibn Shaprut, in which the king of the Chazar people accepted the Jewish religion, somewhere in the midst of the eighth century, so that three or four generations afterwards, Judaism was formally established as the official religion of this kingdom which lasted into the eleventh century. Judah ha-Levi made good use of this dramatic event, which gives the title to his book. He framed the story as a conjectured dialogue: the Chazar king discovering in a dream the inadequacy of his own religious ritual calls

in Christian and Mohammedan philosophers to inquire of their religions; when these refer to the Jewish sources for their own religions, the king sees the wisdom of consulting a Jewish scholar, of going directly to the sources — and this leads to his acceptance of Judaism. In each challenging question of the king and each satisfactory reply of the Jew the author progresses with the unfolding of his theme — a method of treatment reminiscent of Plato's Dialogues.

The central problem introduces the book and recurs over and over again. How can God have any relationship with man? How can God appear to man? Aristotle had taught that God cannot be in any relation to anything. He simply is. He thinks Himself. Entirely separated is He from the world. Now the whole structure of Rabbinic Judaism had been built on the basis that God had revealed Himself in some special manner to the prophets of Israel, to the authors of the Bible and its implied supplement the Talmud, which contained the complete will of God, directing Jews how to live the religious life. Here lies the difficulty which philosophy projects: if it is impossible for God to reveal Himself to man, what happens to the whole basis of Rabbinic Judaism? The ground is taken away from under it. Saadia Gaon had struggled with the problem but he could not solve it. Solomon ibn Gabirol, the first systematic dualist, tacitly side-stepped the problem by ignoring it. Not satisfied, Judah ha-Levi boldly worked out the direct relationship between the prophets and God and showed how it is possible.

To begin with, nature operates according to regular laws which make it constant and unvarying; God is constant and unvarying; therefore it is possible for God to be bound up with nature, because both are constant and unvarying, and fit in together. But man is not constant; he is changeable; he is a free agent who can choose good or bad; if God links Himself to man, He necessarily makes Himself dependent upon the good or bad action of man: that would reduce the calibre of God. To use the illustration of the meshing of gear-teeth: can changeable man mesh with the unchangeable God? That is the difficulty. Judah ha-Levi overcomes the

difficulty by making of the prophet a supernatural being, a member of the fifth kingdom of nature, above the plant, mineral, animal, and human life. The prophet displays powers which the ordinary man cannot understand, even as the ordinary man displays powers which the animal cannot understand. One formula expresses the entire plan of the world. That formula exists in all the five kingdoms, but the ingredients which enter the formula differ, and that is what makes the difference in each of the five kingdoms of creation. History is a continuation of nature in that it creates a new type in nature, the prophet, because of the higher ingredients — prayer, piety, and so on — which develop during the course of history and build up the prophet. A special ritual of religion which God has revealed to Israel creates a disposition for the prophet to appear, even as the sun and rain create a disposition for the plants to grow. Whereas Bahya ibn Pakuda taught that the ritual law is only secondary to the moral law, and Saadia held that both are equal, ha-Levi maintained that the ritual law is the more important — since it facilitates the creation of the higher type of life, the prophet — but still, the moral law is an indispensable preparation for the ritual. The formula according to which the elements which compose life are combined is the secret of God, but the ingredients which go to make up a higher form of life is the revelation of God to Israel. That revelation puts Israel on a higher level than other people and makes possible the production of a prophet. If a man decides by his own free will to imbibe the necessary ingredients and to become a prophet, he then and there puts himself entirely under the divine law; once having made the decision to be a prophet, and now living under the divine law, he no longer exercises his power to vary from good to bad, but is constantly good; being constant and unvarying, he can now definitely link (mesh) himself with God, and that is the relationship which makes revelation possible. So the problem is solved.

To this the author added that he who gratifies all his natural appetites puts himself under the law of nature, but if he temporarily places himself under the divine law he is to that



extent a prophet. If only momentarily, the children of Israel heard the voice of God at Mount Sinai and Moses received His revelation : this is the basis and justification of Judaism.

Such an outlook is intensely national. In keeping with his interpretation of Judaism, Judah ha-Levi is known as the Jewish national poet. Prior to his unknown death in Palestine, whither he ever longed to journey, he couched in enthralling words the immortal hope for Israel's return to the Holy Land : this "Zionide" never fails to stir hope when read, as it still is, on the sad day commemorating the fall of the Temple.

Abraham ibn Ezra was another poet-philosopher of this age, with a reputation for having composed a hundred and eight books. Poor in money and rich in intellect, ibn Ezra gave a rather pathetic turn to his poetry in the complaint that if he made it his business to sell candles the sun would forever shine, and if he were to try to sell shrouds no one would die. His philosophy leaned toward neo-Platonism, which ibn Gabirol had already introduced into Judaism. He exhibited great acumen in his understanding of the Hebrew grammar, which he held to be essential for a proper appreciation of the Bible. This interesting combination — a mastery of grammar, a mastery of poetic diction and a grasp of philosophy — was sure to give an interesting turn to his exegesis : his continuous commentary on the Bible, while not as popular as Rashi's, searches more deeply.

In the preceding century, Moses ibn Gikatilla had applied historical criticism to the Bible, pointing out for the first time that the Book of Isaiah holds the writings of two different authors, that the contents of Chapter 40 onwards refer to the time of the Second Temple ; that many of the Psalms, too, date from post-exilic time : these opinions Abraham ibn Ezra accepted. Abraham suspected, further, that some portions of the Pentateuch are of post-Mosaic origin. Also the Book of Job, which the Talmud identified as Mosaic in origin, he judged to be a translation from another language. The angel between God and man, he said, is the intellect. Abraham ibn Ezra was a profound and independent thinker. The pity is that the fear of heresy frightened him from expressing

himself freely. These startling discoveries he hinted at but vaguely — a compromise between truth and timidity.

A daring attempt to combine the extreme rationalism of Aristotle with Judaism was made by Abraham ibn Daud in the second half of the twelfth century. He lived in Toledo, the capital of Christian Spain in the north, where Jewish culture carried on when Islamic zeal made life intolerable in the south. While also a Talmudist and historian, his claim to fame in the evolution of Judaism lies in the fact that he was the first to introduce Aristotelianism into Judaism. The Kalamist speculations and neo-Platonism were the two earlier waves of philosophic influence. Upon the appearance of Aristotelianism on the scene of medieval European thought, Judah ha-Levi had set out to disparage it. However, ibn Daud made it his duty to reconcile Aristotle with Judaism, and thereby introduced Aristotle into Judaism.

In "The Sublime Faith," ibn Daud stated his unequivocal preference for the Jewish religion, since that came immediately through revelation whereas the knowledge of the philosophers took thousands of years of discovery and called for a continual correction of errors. His attempt to harmonize the two naturally led him into a conflict with Aristotelian thought. Aristotle, for example, taught that matter is eternal, but the Bible tells of the creation at a specific time. (To modern minds either is equally incomprehensible.) This and other problems of reconciliation proved too much for ibn Daud's talents — he could do no more than skim lightly over the difficulties — and his problems had to await the treatment of a greater mind.

## 25. THE GREATEST JEWISH TEACHER OF THE MIDDLE AGES

MOSES MAIMONIDES (1135-1204) possessed the greater mind, nay, the greatest mind in medieval Jewry, if not in the medieval world. Even in his lifetime, it was said, "From Moses to Moses (Maimonides) there has arisen none like unto him." To him Jewish communities in their perplexities

turned for the light of incisive thinking and compelling faith. Little wonder that he is lovingly remembered as the "Light of the Exile."

His "Guide of the Perplexed," which he wrote in Arabic during the spare hours he could snatch from an extensive and eminent practice of medicine, has been called the greatest book in Jewish literature. Modestly he spoke of it as a commentary on the Prophetic Books of the Bible, written at the request of a favorite disciple to whom he dedicated it. Actually his "Guide of the Perplexed" probes the most perplexing problems of religion. It clears up the doubts which had troubled ibn Daud.

How to reconcile the Bible with Aristotle? That is the question. For Maimonides there is no contradiction. Where the two seem irreconcilable, Aristotle is in error. In all but the irreconcilable elements Maimonides adopted the doctrines of Aristotle as he learned them through the Arab philosopher Avicenna. The Aristotelian doctrine that matter is eternal he could not accept. He refused to accept it, not because the Bible speaks of Creation at a designated time—in a pinch, Maimonides admits, he could explain that portion of the Bible in such a way as to make it agree with the eternity of matter—but because the eternity of matter is a fallacious doctrine for which the proof is not conclusive, and there is equally good proof for the Jewish *creatio ex nihilo*. Against Aristotle, Maimonides argues that although the world as it is now may point to eternity of matter, it may not have been the same way at an earlier time when the world was less fully developed, it may not then have indicated the eternity of matter; the world probably took on these signs of eternity in the course of the unfolding of the universe, signs which earlier had no real existence. Moreover, our knowledge of the Primal Cause (God) of the universe is inadequate as a basis for arguments concerning the eternity of matter. Thus, Maimonides, while conscious that he has not proven the creation of matter at a particular time, knows however that the other view, the eternity view of Aristotle, cannot be proven either.

Convinced that the divine truth was revealed to the prophets in the written Bible and the oral tradition, Maimonides held that the conflict between philosophy and Judaism in the minds of Jewish thinkers arose from a misinterpretation of anthropomorphic passages in the Bible which speak of God as acting in the manner of a human being, also in references to angels and analogous phenomena. The true interpretation, according to Maimonides, is that these are expressions and figures of speech whose purpose it is to make clear to the ordinary mind what would otherwise be unintelligible. But the real and inner meaning, a philosophical understanding which the prophets had transmitted but which, alas! was lost during persecutions, leaves no conflict between the Bible and Aristotle. When these Biblical passages are understood allegorically and metaphorically, it becomes crystal clear that God is incorporeal: anyone believing otherwise is no better than an idolator.

In the history of Judaism, all other attempts to remove anthropomorphisms, since the very first translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic, did not go as far as Maimonides. He did not see how one could attach any attributes to God. The essence of God could be stated only in negative terms: He is not non-existent, not non-eternal, not impotent, not physical. We can know no more than: He is. Thus, in speaking of a spiritual God we mean the absence of any material quality or attribute. If one wishes to speak of God's attributes, one can do no more than refer to His actions—distinct from His essence—and this is precisely what the divine names in the Bible do: they describe the divine behavior, not what the divine *is*. God acts as Active Intellect. But Active Intellect is not material; it is a process, in the sense—to adopt a modern illustration—that energy is not a material but is a process which makes use of matter.

Everything is process, says Maimonides; we ourselves are only processes. God is The Process. The only reality is thinking. God is the only absolute reality; God is the highest degree of thought, namely, the Active Intellect. Creation is not a new addition of something that had no existence;

rather is creation the decision of God, arrived at through His own free will, to manifest Himself, in lower degrees of reality. That means that everything that exists is congealed intellect. The reality of a table, for example, is in the countless laws bound up in it, and these laws are the subject of thinking.

In this world, man is the highest creation because he has developed the mental processes. Man gains the immortality of the intellect (this is contrary to the traditional doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which Maimonides adopts elsewhere). The perfection of the moral, intellectual and physical faculties produces the prophet (except Moses whose prophecy is supernatural), a natural product of natural law; nevertheless, even if one has perfected these faculties, God may withhold prophecy from him. Over each human being God has a special regard. He is aware of all the events of the future, yet has He given free-will to man. There is no contradiction: God can know the future and man can still do as he chooses, because God's knowledge is unlike man's knowledge; in fact, human intelligence cannot comprehend the nature of divine intelligence. That the human mind could not grasp all of spiritual reality did not thwart Maimonides: rather than reject the inscrutable, he allowed faith to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown. The fact that God knows things while they are in a state of possibility — when their existence belongs to the future — does not change the nature of the "possible" in any way; that remains unchanged; and the knowledge of the realization of one of several possibilities does not affect that realization.

With regard to the evils of the world, the "Guide" maintains that, not including those which are bound up with the perpetuation of the species in nature, evils are created by man. As divine guidance for the life of integrity, religion has given us the ritual as well as the moral precepts. Crude ritual, such as animal sacrifices, is but a concession to a lowly idolatrous craving, but most ritual leads to moral improvement.

The real aim in life is happiness, to be won through the use of the intellect. The highest knowledge is the knowledge of

God, and that is attained by a rational conquest of sensuality. Reason achieves virtue through following a middle course : moral courage, for example, is the golden mean between temerity and cowardice ; likewise there is a golden mean between justice and mercy, between the practical and the ideal.

The intellectual quest for God brought Maimonides again and again to the inherited faith. Since the Oral and Written Law contained the highest truth, Maimonides felt it his duty to give it system, order, clarity, brevity. When only twenty-three years old he began writing an Arabic commentary on the Mishnah, which he called the "Luminary." A mind as creative as his could not confine itself to a mere commentary, simply running along with the text and elucidating its meaning. In the "Luminary," therefore, a lengthy introduction reviews the origin, plan and arrangement of the Mishnah ; reviews the laws of Judaism ; and introductions precede the various Tractates. Maimonides had his eye on the practical use of his commentary as a guide for the Jewish life, and he therefore focused attention upon the decision rather than the argument. At times he boldly differed with the version expressed in the Talmud. His vast scientific knowledge gave especial value to his comments on such matters. Wherever possible, he rapped at errors and superstitions.

Apropos of the Mishnah passage which enumerates those unbelievers who are excluded from a share in the world to come, Maimonides stresses Judaism against the other religions and the heresies of his day by insisting on thirteen items which a Jew, to avoid excommunication, should affirm : God's existence and indivisible unity, incorporeality, immutability, eternity, pre-mundane existence and exclusive claim to worship ; the prophets were inspired, Moses especially and incomparably so, and the Torah is divine and unchangeable ; providence punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous ; in the future, the Messiah will come and a resurrection of the dead will take place. These thirteen specifications on matters of belief and practice were in time given a prominent place in the prayer-book as the best précis of the Jewish faith, and to this day they constitute a convenient standard of orthodoxy. The

century following Maimonides saw these articles of faith employed as themes for synagogue poems, so popular did they become in all countries of Jewish habitation. Altogether, some eighty-eight poetic versions of the thirteen articles are to be counted, and the most popular is the well-known Yigdal, that liturgic verse which has been the inspiration for a great variety of musical creations.

Maimonides proceeded to classify according to fourteen principles the traditional six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah. This was necessary because of the confusion as to what was and what was not a commandment. Some statements seemed like commandments but they might be only introductory or explanatory to a commandment. This classification he worked upon in his Arabic "Book of Precepts."

The realization came to Maimonides that his commentary on the Mishnah could not altogether satisfy its purpose. The Mishnah itself called for rearrangement, that all the material be lined up strictly and systematically according to subject. This vast enterprise Maimonides delegated unto himself. Into the fourteen divisions of Torah commandments which he had worked out he sorted and classified the entire accumulation of traditional Law, a task which took all of ten years. The Hebrew abbreviation for fourteen ("Yad")—the fourteen classifications—can be read to mean "a hand"; therefore this codification of rabbinic Law is referred to as "The Strong Hand." Maimonides gave it the title, "The Second Law" (Mishneh Torah), for did it not contain all of the Oral Law, the regulations and explanations, the ethical ideas and established customs of the Mishnah, plus those of the later rabbis and the Geonim who added to the interpretation of the Written Torah of Moses?

That this tremendous achievement might enjoy practical use as a "Code" of Jewish practice, Maimonides strove for clarity and brevity: in the understandable Hebrew of the Mishnah rather than the complicated Aramaic of the Talmud did he write it; in the preface he listed his bibliography and all the authorities in the long train of tradition; in the text

itself he therefore eliminated continual reference to particular sages and specific documents. His sources were extensive, more extensive than those of any predecessor; they included the Torah itself, the Jerusalem as well as the Babylonian Talmud, the Midrash Halakah, his own and not his own teachers, non-Jewish scholars, and ultimately his own independent judgment. Maimonides thus brought the Mishnah up to date, made it more methodical, more readable, more usable.

So daring an undertaking, the first complete classification of Rabbinic Judaism, was bound to arouse antagonism. Some of it, frankly, was prompted by sheer envy, as in the case of the Gaon of Bagdad. Others honestly feared that the "Code" would displace the Talmud. Particularly vehement and also sincere was the criticism of Abraham ben David of Posquières in Provence. The departure from well-worn grooves was censured, the undaunted originality, the use of Hebrew, the deviation from the Talmudic sequence, the importance given to the Jerusalem Talmud over the Babylonian, the omissions and the additions, and particularly the omission of reference to sources. To all this Maimonides replied satisfactorily and honestly.

After the flurry of criticism of the "Code" had died down, this real masterpiece took its proper place in Judaism as the authority in the interpretation of Jewish life, an authority not to be controverted, and its author, the greatest philosopher of that age, was reverently acknowledged the greatest Talmudist as well. Generations of Jews have idealized Moses Maimonides as the exemplary product of medieval Judaism, for he attained in his life a harmony of faith and reason, of pragmatism and idealism, of skilled practice and scholarly pursuits.

## 26. PROTEST AGAINST RATIONALISM IN RELIGION :

### LEGALISM

CRITICISM of Maimonides' philosophy did not end so soon. It continued even after the "Code" had gained acceptance. For more than two centuries it stimulated heated controversies



between rationalists and anti-rationalists, liberals and orthodox. The protest to philosophy in religion led in two directions: one, a deeper absorption in legalism; the second, a flight into mysticism.

The conflict took a dramatic turn in Provence, the south-eastern area of France. Provence bridges Spain and northern France. In its territory, therefore, the philosophic liberalism of Spanish Jewry and the conservatism of northern France met. The renowned ibn Tibbon family served as intermediaries by translating into Hebrew the Arabic works of the Spanish Jews and also the literature of Aristotle and Averroës.

The intellectuals hailed the "Guide of the Perplexed" as the superlative in accomplishment. Eagerly they drank in every word. Keenly they weighed every argument. Some liberals saw in the "Guide" an excuse for religious laxity, which was of course contrary to Maimonides' practice or intention. This danger in particular provoked the antagonism of the orthodox. The brunt of their opposition therefore shifted from the "Code" to the "Guide." The statement that it would be possible if necessary to reconcile the theory of the eternity of the universe with the creation account of the Bible scandalized many. The teaching that angels are to be understood allegorically, as also the rationalizing of prophecy, raised the cry of heresy. The "Guide of the Perplexed" seems indeed to have perplexed those not philosophically trained. One complainant, Solomon ben Abraham, believed in the literal truth of every word in the Bible and of the tales in the Midrash Haggadah. Together with two disciples, he pronounced a ban on all who immersed themselves in philosophy. In the north of France this benighted attitude found support. The more enlightened communities returned ban for ban. It was only a matter of time before the quarrel flared into physical violence and spread into northern Spain. Infuriated, the afore-mentioned Solomon ben Abraham made the stupid and unforgivable blunder of informing the Dominican inquisitors of the conflict, as a result of which they publicly burned copies of Maimonides' writings. This foolhardy desecration of the Biblical and Mishnaic principles of

freedom in the intellectual search for God did at least silence the opposition — for a while.

Efforts at conciliation were exerted by the most prominent teacher in the middle of the thirteenth century, Moses ben Nahman of Gerona (Nahmanides). By profession a physician, he was *au courant* with science and could admire Maimonides; yet he held philosophy to be of little consequence in religion. For him Judaism was more a matter of mystery, not to be easily explained. It was to be taken as it was. It was something to be lived through the saddest and gladdest moments of life. Life, God, the World, all these are marvelous, miraculous. And all that could be known thereof is to be found in the Bible and Talmud. In line with such reasoning, Moses ben Nahman made it his objective to introduce into Spain the hair-splitting study of the Talmud as it was carried on in France and Germany. The "Code" of Maimonides he defended. The "Guide" he opposed — but moderately, advocating the removal of the absolute ban on the "Guide," in place of which he would restrict its study to private discourse amid select and mature students whose minds were not too impressionable or too easily misled by a glib syllogism.

In connection with Moses ben Nahman, it is worth recording an example of a miserable form of religious sport which provided *divertisement* for the jaded tastes of the Middle Ages. In 1263, a Jew baptized into the Dominican Order, Pablo Christiani by name, whose business it was to convert Jews to Christianity, found business unpromising. To stimulate interest he persuaded the king of Aragon to summon the leading rabbi to compete with him in a public debate, to be graced by the attendance of the king and his court and the church dignitaries. Moses ben Nahman had no choice. Under protest, he took the field as spokesman for Judaism. The torture of religious combat lasted four days. The renegade Pablo contended that the Messiah had come and that the homiletic Midrashim of Judaism even supported that contention. Nahmanides, champion of Judaism, retorted that Jews could not believe that the Messiah had come; moreover, that

only the Bible and Talmud were binding upon Jews, but that the homilectic literature to which Pablo had referred was non-binding, frequently fallible, at best the expression of private opinion, and at worst a playful stretch of the imagination. Nahmanides exposed and confounded Pablo Christiani. Even so, Jewry dreaded a bitter sequel to the disputation.

Defeat would have given an opening wedge to missionizing zeal. But victory was worse! Victory infuriated the losers and drove them to rabid retaliation. Pablo together with the Dominican inquisitors now schemed to address the Jews in the synagogue on the Sabbath with the proposition that the Jewish leader had submitted to defeat and that therefore the Jews forsake their religion for Christianity. Resolutely and vigorously Nahmanides denied such defeat. Despite his consistent boldness, Moses Nahmanides had impressed the king of Aragon with his grace of speech and manner as well as with his intellect and received from him a gift of three hundred ducats. Notwithstanding that, Pablo was given permission to enter Jewish homes to ply his trade, and he was allowed to censor Jewish books. When Pablo spread false reports of the result of the disputation, Nahmanides refuted them and published a correct statement. Because the man Nahmanides would not back down the Dominicans accused him of blasphemy and demanded punishment. The king, however, protested in behalf of the Jew, that he had given him royal protection to express himself freely. Pablo and his confrères would not take "no" for an answer, so that the Jewish books were burned and Moses ben Nahman was banished for two years. What desecration of the fair name of religion to pit the respective representatives of two great faiths, one against the other, in bitter controversy, when both in their own way seek the path to God!

At the end of the thirteenth century the conflict over Maimonides revived. Inter-religious polemics and increasing political worries combined to drive Judaism under cover. The rabbinic leader of that period, Solomon ibn Adret of Barcelona, a pupil of Nahmanides, stood solidly with the

orthodox faction. Talmud was authoritative. In rough going, one could always cling to the Talmud for safe and sound Judaism. In 1305 he proclaimed a ban, supported by thirty of his associates, limiting the study of philosophy and science, other than medicine, to men over the safe age of thirty—philosophy begins at thirty.

## 27. PROTEST AGAINST RATIONALISM IN RELIGION: MYSTICISM

THE thirteenth century protest against the rationalism of Maimonides and his ancestors took on a rather interesting form of expression. Although many, as we have seen, found shelter in legalism, it was too arid and uninspiring for those who looked to religion for emotional satisfaction. Their minds turned to mystical speculation. Reacting against the sovereignty of logic and intellect, they viewed the world as a bundle of mystery rather than a clear-cut, orderly system—to be sensed rather than understood. Mysticism therefore made rapid strides during the thirteenth century.

Jewish mysticism did not begin at this time. Its sources are remote. In fact, the Hebrew term for mysticism is Cabala, which means tradition, for it claims the background of a long tradition. The Cabala (or the “received lore” of mysticism) is traced far back to a few privileged personages to whom the secret knowledge of God and the universe was divulged. According to the Cabalists, Moses on Mount Sinai and the prophets after him “received” the Cabala.

There is considerable truth to the claim of Cabalistic antiquity. As early as the second century B.C.E., Ben Sira cautioned against preoccupation with “secret things.” The apocalyptic writings of the two centuries before the Common Era taught a good measure of Cabala. The Essenes in their day sequestered that hidden knowledge. Moreover, Greek philosophy of a mystical bent intrigued groups of Jews, particularly in Alexandria, convincing them that these secret doctrines were stowed away in the Bible and could be discovered only by the few who knew how to pry beneath the outer expression and find the inner meaning. Further in

the early story of Cabala, we find that some of the rabbis of the Mishnah were familiar with the old Pythagorean idea that by combining letters and numbers according to intricate formulas one is empowered to effect marvels. In the later Talmud are to be found many elements of mysticism, not harmonized or systematized but rather scattered and heterogeneous. As greater attention came to mysticism, the lore grew more expansive and complex. Two types of mysticism could now be differentiated: the speculative or theosophic, and the practical or theurgic.

In the period of the Geonim there already existed books recording the oral tradition of practical mysticism. They described the wonder-working ability to control nature through a knowledge of the names and functions of the angels. They indicated how the use of these names could confer immunity against sickness and against enemies.

Speculative mysticism found its chief expression in the "Book of Creation" (*Sefer Yezirah*), an ancient record with which the name of Abraham is coupled but which is of uncertain origin and date, going back possibly to the time of the Talmud. In the ninth century it gained much attention and even Saadia made it the subject of a commentary. The "Book of Creation," regarded as the oldest treatment of philosophy in the Hebraic tongue, sets out to show God's relation with the world. It reveals that all things exist as a result of ten Sefirot—emanations or gradations—which graduate from God to the universe, and serve as the intermediaries. All things have as their substance the three primal elements, spirit-like air, water, fire. All things have as their form the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the language which these letters create enables us to gain knowledge of things as they are.

From Babylonia, through Italy, the complete lore of the Cabala reached Germany as the private possession of the Kalonymus family, a carefully guarded secret. One of the family, Judah the Pious, at the end of the twelfth century wrote the "Book of the Pious" (*Sefer Hasidim*), a work of extensive influence, stressing the inwardness of religion; ad-

vocating prayer in a language which is understood if Hebrew be unintelligible, for consummation in prayer is utter devotion (Kawwanah) ; and demanding scrupulous honesty and piety in the most trivial matters, lest God be dishonored. Rebelling against an unemotional ritualism and a dry poring over the Talmud, Judah sought to make religion more thrilling, more ecstatic. He instructed his disciple, Eleazar, to initiate greater numbers into the hidden knowledge of the Cabala.

In Spain, the neo-Platonic thought which ibn Gabirol had popularized reinforced the speculative side of mysticism, inasmuch as neo-Platonism is a philosophy which opens the door to mysticism. Then came the reaction against the Aristotelianism of Maimonides, giving tremendous impetus to the Cabala, which in a sense is the very contrast of Maimonides' thought. Azriel (1160-1238), a philosophically trained Spanish Jew, set out to win over the philosophically minded to the Cabala through dialectic proof whereby he hoped to convince them of the truth of the Cabala—which believers of course accepted without proof or argument. Moses ben Nahman had been a disciple of his and from him had acquired a reasonable inclination toward mysticism ; Solomon ibn Adret had also studied under Azriel and likewise had developed propensities to the Cabala.

Opposition to the speculative trend appeared in the puzzling personality of Abraham Abulafia (1240-1292). He preferred the German-Jewish system, the practical manipulations which bring one into intimate contact with the active intelligence of the universe and endow one with the mighty powers of the prophet. Abulafia, having wandered to the East when only twenty years old, in search of the mythical river Sambation, returned to Verona, Italy, and to Barcelona, Spain, where he studied the Cabala. At the age of fifty, the great revelation came to him. With fanciful ingenuity he saw in the letters of the Bible and in the letters of the divine name the mystical energy of creation. The necessary knack consisted in combining the letters skilfully and in working upon the numerical values of the Hebrew letters of the alphabet. He proclaimed himself a prophet, taking the name

of the angel Raziel ("My secret is God") which has the same numerical value as his name, Abraham. Then he revealed himself as the Messiah, announcing that redemption was to come in six years, in 1290, and feverishly he made his way to Rome to convert the pope to Judaism. But the pope died before Abulafia could achieve his purpose. Even so, he was thrown into prison, but here his abracadabra stood him in good stead and by mystifying his captors he gained his release. How now should the Jewish community receive him? Solomon ibn Adret was consulted and he condemned Abulafia as dangerous, to be shunned. The latter finally came to an unknown end, leaving twenty-six books of a "different" nature and some "extraordinary" disciples. Thus ended a one-sided exaggeration of mysticism.

Apart from this bizarre incident, the two sides of mysticism — the speculative and the wonder-working — were drawing closer together and toward the end of the thirteenth century they merged. The heterogeneous elements which had been carried along verbally — mystic sayings in the Talmud, speculations of the Gaonic times, neo-Platonic thought — were now assembled. The decision to put them into writing may have been prompted by the desire to gain a wider following in opposition to extreme rationalism. The large conglomeration of mystical and poetic material, written in Aramaic, took on the shape of a Midrashic commentary on the Pentateuch, revealing the hidden mysteries contained in the Bible. This arrangement was published in the early part of the fourteenth century as the "Midrash of Simeon ben Yohai."

It was called by the name of that rabbi of the second century C.E. because he is supposed to have arrived at this great mystical knowledge during the thirteen years of enforced hiding in a cave and to have conveyed it to his disciples in two meetings prior to his death. As in so much of the apocalyptic literature, the authorship of material which had been accumulated during a stretch of centuries was attributed to one outstanding personality of the remote past, to give it antiquity, sanctity and authenticity. Actually, the Cabalistic compilation was the work of Moses de Leon, at one time of

ibn Adret's school. The volume has become renowned the world over as the "Zohar." The word Zohar means "splendor" and is derived from the verse in the Book of Daniel (12 : 3) : "The wise shall be resplendent as the splendor of the firmament."

The Zohar seeks to bring man close to God who would otherwise remain afar off. It makes the approach to the divine practical by uniting it with the specific events of life. It filters into all the domains of life, which metaphysics ordinarily does not do. To begin with, God is shown as infinite, without any attributes. Only in terms of what He is not, can God be described. He can be spoken of simply as En-Sof, the Infinite ; beyond the Infinite, nothing exists. If so, how can the creation of the world be understood ? Did the Infinite suddenly decide upon that ? Is it consistent for the Infinite to change and suddenly become creative ? How could a spiritual God, moreover, create a material world ? How can God's providence express itself in ruling the world ? How can evil come into a world created by a perfect God ? How explain the construction of body and soul, and what happens after life ? These are the foremost questions of the Zohar. The abstruse reply leads into the realm of metaphysics, into a discussion of the Thought of God, the Concentration of God (Zimzum), the Emanations from God (Sefirot). All this complicated metaphysics, however, is but the scaffolding on which man may climb to the heights, close to God. Through his love for God, through prayer, through devotion, through the avoidance of evil, man unites himself to God.

The Zohar contains many crude, anthropomorphic allusions to God ; whether these are meant literally or figuratively is a matter of debate. It also contains many beautiful passages and fine prayers, some of which were later incorporated in the prayerbook. There are fanciful imageries on the essence of the soul : before entering the body the soul-substance floats about in the atmosphere clothed in a raiment of divine light, of which it is stripped when it enters the soul ; this radiant raiment it receives once again at death if the soul has been



pure and righteous, otherwise it floats about naked until purified in purgatory, after which it can return to the spheres of bliss.

The Zohar set itself up as a rival to the Mishnah and Talmud, but although it enjoyed enormous sway over succeeding generations, it has been accepted as authoritative only where it is not contradictory to the Talmud. It has taken its place in Judaism as a life-giving supplement to the Talmud. It has enriched the religious experience, in thought and act. It has produced saints. It has thrilled with the thought of communing with God and participating with Him in the improvement of the world. The Zohar has helped preserve Judaism of the Middle Ages from stagnation: so long as it could fascinate the mind and imagination it would endear Judaism to the Jew.

During centuries of Jewish misery, the prolonged misery from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, it has helped make life tolerable. To some it was an anodyne, allaying the pain of persecution; to others it was a stimulant, filling all life with an exuberant joy.

The religion of the Jew now took on three aspects. The Talmudists held closely to the Talmud solely, with its conservative interpretation. The rationalists continued in the way of Maimonides. The Cabalists, satisfied with neither unrelieved legalism nor rationalist philosophy, steeped themselves in mysticism. The three, however, stood on the same foundation: Rabbinic Judaism. The Cabalists and rationalists did not depart from it: they simply intensified it.

## 28. THE TALMUD A REFUGE IN TIME OF TROUBLE

THE pure Talmudists continued to rally their energies to a practical interpretation and application of the Talmud. Asher ben Jehiel (1250-1328) came to Toledo from Germany with a simple piety and a gratitude that he had been spared the diverting influence of philosophy. His contribution to the development of Judaism is in the improvements he made on al-Fasi's digest of the Talmud. He included all the later

material—the decisions of Rashi and of the Franco-German school of Tosafist scholars—while also including Maimonides' views which he respected. In certain cases he decided against Maimonides' view, which decision the Ashkenazic Jews accepted, but the Sephardic Jews continued to follow the decision of Maimonides.

The sons of Asher ben Jehiel carried on with this inexhaustible summation of Jewish Law. One of them, Rabbenu Jacob ben Asher, boiled down the digest of his father to facilitate its use. Apparently not satisfied, he rearranged all the religious laws into four categories: "The Way of Life" (Orah Hayyim), containing laws on holidays, prayers, ceremonies, daily duties; "Guide of Knowledge" (Yoreh Deah), instructing in the dietary laws, charity, mourning, and all matters forbidden and prohibited; "Stone of Help" (Eben ha-Ezer), regarding marriage and divorce; "The Breastplate of Judgment" (Hoshen ha-Mishpat), touching on civil law and procedure. This code served the needs of that age and it gained wide acceptance as the standard of orthodoxy.

A beautiful practice growing out of the Judaism of the Middle Ages was that of leaving an Ethical Will as a heritage for one's children. If a good name and a virtuous life are the greatest of riches, then the finest gift a father can bequeath to his child is the time-tested instruction on how to win a good name and a virtuous life. Rabbenu Jacob and also his brother left Ethical Wills for their children. That became quite the fashion. There is, indeed, a voluminous literature of Ethical Wills, in which parent conveys to child the sum total of a lifetime of experience. As one reads into it one finds charming evidence of how intimately Judaism touched all of life, of how highly its doctrines were valued, and of how devoted was the relationship in Judaism between parent and child.

In the fourteenth century the philosophical movement in Judaism, as a movement, was approaching its end. The Cabala was rapidly displacing it. Moreover, Christians in Spain were gradually reconquering the Moorish territory, and in doing so were driving out the Mohammedan philosophers

as well; in this new environment there were not the same opportunities of participating in intellectual pursuits.

One of the last of the original philosophers was Levi ben Gershon (1288-1344) of Provence, known as Gersonides. Like so many of the Jewish scientists he was a physician, in addition to which he gained fame in the world-at-large as mathematician and astronomer, having invented a device for astronomical observation. His philosophy was bold. It was outspoken. It could not be otherwise: he confesses he would not have spoken as he did had his search for truth not led him to these daring conclusions. To be sure, he accepted the Torah as certified truth; nevertheless, accusations of radicalism were levelled against him. His book, "Wars of the Lord," his enemies designated as "Wars Against the Lord." In it he carries Aristotelianism to the extreme, yet thinking he reconciles it with Judaism. The book is in six parts: the immortality of the soul; the essence of prophecy; predestination and free-will; providence, man being subject to the general laws of nature, and only the intellectualized individual sharing individual providence; mathematical and astronomical explanation of the universe; the question of eternity of matter, in which he admits the existence of formless matter before creation. Gersonides thus agreed with Aristotle more completely than did Maimonides, for where there were irreconcilables Maimonides had sided with Judaism.

The stage had now been reached when it was necessary, from the standpoint of Talmudic Judaism, to rid Judaism of Aristotelianism, once for all. Judaism had to be proven superior to any system of philosophy. Hasdai Crescas (1340-1410) was the man to do this. Though not a rabbi officially, he possessed independent means which gave him leisure to perfect his knowledge of the Talmud and to serve as communal leader. The task which he undertook was similar to that of Judah ha-Levi, only more difficult. He had Maimonides and Gersonides, especially Maimonides, to cope with.

On a philosophic field of combat Crescas strove to disengage Judaism from the alien attachment to Aristotelianism. If he could refute the underlying Aristotelian principles

which had been adopted as basic by some of the Jewish philosophers he would be able to lay low his opponent. That, in short, is what he attempted in the volume, "Light of the Lord" (Or Adonai). Even where he cannot win the argument he is undaunted, for, after all, there are arguments in both directions. Logic or argument can hardly be conclusive if there are two sides to the argument. The Bible is conclusive. It is revealed by God. Why then impose inconclusive alien philosophies on Judaism?

Discarding philosophy, Crescas prepares a list of Jewish dogmas, as they are to be learned from Judaism itself. He disagrees with Maimonides' list of thirteen articles. Crescas has fourteen, which he divides into those which are essential to the existence of Judaism and those without which Judaism could exist but which should be believed in, nevertheless.

These are the indispensable dogmas ("fundamental principles"): (1) God knows individually all things and people that exist; (2) His providence is over each individual; (3) He is omnipotent; (4) He revealed Himself uniquely to the prophets; (5) He has given man freedom of the will; (6) He has given man the Torah that man might love and fear Him. These grow out of the "great root," which is the axiomatic belief that there is God.

The secondary dogmas ("true beliefs") are: (1) the creation of the universe at a particular time; (2) immortality for those who observe the commandments; (3) punishment of the wicked and reward of the righteous, as earned not by intellectual attainment but by obedience to God's will—evil may not be as unmerited as it seems, it may do a person good, or it may be inherited, or it may be bound up with the group, and retribution is carried on after life; (4) the dead will be resurrected; (5) the Torah is eternal; (6) Moses is supreme; (7) the priest can divine the future through the Urim and Thummim; (8) the Messiah will come.

In addition, he presents as "practical dogmas": the efficacy of prayer, the benediction of the (Aaron) priests, repentance, Day of Atonement, New Year's Day, Passover, Tabernacles, Pentecost. To dogmatize the efficacy of the holy seasons has

been characterized by theologians as the influence of Islam. Other "practical dogmas" have been regarded as the influence of Christianity. Whatever the strength of Crescas' argument, the fact is that he expressed the dominant attitude of the day, a withdrawal from philosophic to dogmatic religion—even though his book was not popularly read.

The position of Crescas was popularized by Joseph Albo (1380-1444) who is counted the last of the medieval philosophers, albeit not an original one. As though he could foretell that he was the last, he summarized the whole surge of philosophy which preceded him. Seasoned with sufficient quotations from the Bible and the Talmud he rendered the book, "Dogmas" (Ikkarim, which means literally "roots"), palatable for the orthodox reader. Moreover, he discriminated which fundamentals are "open to discussion" and which are not. He likened religion to a tree, with roots, branches and stems; the distinctive qualities of a religion are in the stems and branches. There are three "roots": (1) God's existence—with the stems: unity, incorporeality, timelessness, perfection; (2) God's revelations—with the stems: prophecy, prophetic perfection; (3) God's retribution—with the stems: omniscience, providence. These, together, constitute eleven dogmas which are fundamental in Judaism. In addition, he enumerated six "branches," as beliefs which a Jew should accept; however, disbelief of "branches" is not heresy, but merely sinfulness. These non-dogmatic beliefs are: creation at a definite time *ex nihilo*; Moses the greatest prophet; his Torah is eternal; proper attainment of even one commandment may lead to man's perfection; resurrection; the Messiah. To his credit be it noted that Albo succeeded in getting away from the technical philosophical idiom which his experience as a preacher had taught him made such writings illegible for the masses. Incidentally, it is interesting to observe that, writing at a time when Christians were pressing upon Jews acceptance of their Messiah, Albo held that the Messianic doctrine is not a fundamental one in Judaism.

The fifteenth century brought a tragic turn to the Jews of Europe: they were turned out of home and homeland. In

1394 France turned them out. In Germany and all through Central Europe the Crusades and the Black Death made life unbearable. The fanaticism of the Spanish Inquisition turned Jews into disguised Christians, the Maranos. The Talmud was publicly dishonored and burned. The Inquisition branded itself into the Jewish heart, inflicting unbelievable tortures on the Maranos. That wretched spectacle of man's inhumanity to fellow man! Religion; akin to life's most cherished gifts—love and parenthood—religion possesses within itself, when perverted, the makings of the worst kind of ugliness. As "an act of mercy" an edict of 1492 did not put to death unyielding Jews nor forcibly convert them, but merely turned them out of Spain. And the same soon happened in Portugal. Where did the pitiable exiles turn to? To the Ottoman Empire, where Constantinople in the sixteenth century was transformed into the largest Jewish community. To Holland, and thence to England. To Italy. To the newly discovered America.

## 29. RENAISSANCE CRITICS OF OFFICIAL JUDAISM

FOR the world-at-large a new day was dawning. The new Humanism had arrived. Medievalism came to an end. The modern world was in the making. Learning revived. The secular sciences lifted their heads.

Protestantism was asserting itself. Luther hoped to gain the support of the Jews and on occasion came to their defense. In his German translation of the Bible, it is interesting to recall, he was influenced by Rashi's Commentary which had been translated by the priest Nicholas de Lyra: it was therefore said, "If Lyra had not played, Luther would not have danced." And then, because Jews insisted upon remaining Jews, Luther retaliated with the same brand of oppression which before he had denounced.

The new Humanism which began in Italy and which changed the structure and outlook of Europe was slow in reaching the religion of the Jew. Spain was the logical meeting-ground for Judaism to have come into contact with the

spirit of the Renaissance, Spain the home of Jewish poetry and philosophy and philology, Spain the locale of Jewish liberalism. Doubly tragic, therefore, was the exile of 1492. Jews forfeited their homes, but equally deplorable, Judaism lost the opportunity for participation in the Renaissance. The effects of the Renaissance on Judaism were thus delayed three centuries, and when they did come, long overdue, they came with a sudden rush, well-nigh overwhelming the Judaism of old.

As it was, the Middle Ages for Europe ended in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries; for Judaism, the Middle Ages lasted into the nineteenth century.

During the very years when the European intellectual and religious revolution was going on, Jews were segregated in the ghetto. Civic disabilities heaped upon them kept them from participating. Only in those countries where they were allowed some measure of human rights was this new influence felt to any degree. At best it could be felt only weakly and tardily. Until the full emancipation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whatever criticisms there were within the Jewish group against official Judaism could be but individual expressions. According to the temperament and philosophic outlook of the critic did the criticism vary.

In Italy, the home of Humanism, one finds the first evidences of dissatisfaction with the religion. A mild beginning is to be seen in the opinions of Elijah del Medigo (1460-1497), lecturer in philosophy at the University of Padua. In "The Examination of Religion" he justified the Talmudic presentment of Judaism, since religion is essentially a matter of proper performance, but he did not agree that everything in the Talmud is the infallible interpretation of the Bible: certainly some of the Haggadic passages are illogical, and even when they are logical they are not binding. But in stating that after all Judaism is founded on revelation and therefore need not fear philosophy, Elijah retreated to a mild position. Even so, a more orthodox leader imposed on him the dreaded ban.

Azariah dei Rossi (1514-1578) was more daring. His study, "The Light of the Eyes," applied historical criticism

to Jewish literature and for purposes of comparison consulted sources other than Jewish. Here we have the beginnings of the modern method.

In Uriel da Costa (1585-1640) we find the first really piercing criticism. Coming from a Marano family, he was reared in Portugal as a Jesuit. Then when his family settled in Amsterdam he openly professed his Judaism. But he was dissatisfied with all the ritualism of Rabbinic Judaism as he saw it practiced in Holland and freely expressed his contempt by applying to his coreligionists the epithet, Pharisees, and by violating the dietary and other ritual laws. Then he specified in a book his doubts of immortality and of retribution in a future world, contrasting the Bible with the rabbis on these doctrines. A denial of immortality was as offensive to Christianity as to Judaism; to preclude the wrath of the Christian neighbors the Jewish leaders therefore saw to it that the government fined Uriel and that the book was burned. He was excommunicated. That proved too much for da Costa; even though he fled to Hamburg, he could not escape the mental torture. Returning to Holland, he apologized. Back in the fold, and still he would not conform. He now became a deist, a believer in religion without ceremonies or dogmas. Once more he was excommunicated. Sullenly he suffered for seven years and again he offered to submit. While consenting to readmit him, the rabbinic leaders also wanted to make an example of him: publicly they forced him to renounce his heresy, publicly to be whipped and humiliated. This was more than he could bear; disgraced, Uriel later took his life. In his room was found a pathetic autobiography, "*Exemplar Humanae Vitae*." Two tragedies were bound up in the one life. First, da Costa — because a Marano — lacked a proper training in Judaism and hence a proper understanding of the historical development in Judaism; his criticism was altogether too destructive. Secondly, he lived two centuries too soon.

The pathetic career of Uriel da Costa connects indirectly with an enigmatic character in Italy, named Judah Leon Modena (1571-1648). Judah Leon belonged to an honored



and learned family. He is said to have been quite a prodigy, at the age of three capable of explaining the weekly reading from the Bible, at the age of eight accomplished in music, dancing, and Latin, and a preacher at ten years of age — versatile, to say the least. Twenty-six different occupations did he pursue in his lifetime. Card-playing was his weakness: he played too much and, what was worse, he lost too frequently. At one time he wrote of the evils of card-playing — he was in a position to know. But when a ban was placed on cards, he could argue as brilliantly against the ban. He, the idler, was appropriately the author of a penitential prayer in Jewish liturgy. He opposed the Cabala and the idea of the transmigration of the soul, but he did not hesitate to issue amulets.

Most puzzling of all is a book Judah Leon Modena wrote “in defense” of Rabbinic Judaism. Ninety percent of it is unsparing criticism! In the first part, which he titles “Voice of the Fool,” he gives the views of an assumed Jewish heretic of Spain who advocates the abolition of the prayerbook, suggests a new prayer of six lines to suffice for the day, and two lines of grace after meals, opposes the dietary laws, opposes the second days of holidays, opposes fasting on Yom Kippur, insisting that the ritual laws of the rabbis have no basis in the word of God. The second part of the book, Judah Leon’s “defense” titled “The Roar of Leon” (“the lion”), dedicates all of four pages in reply to the bulk of the radical and penetrating criticism — a most unsatisfactory and incomplete reply. Why did he do that? Did he really mean to attack Judaism, to invent the heretic as a device through whom he could speak his own mind without incurring the penalty that befell da Costa, and were the four scanty pages of reply mere camouflage?

In similar fashion, a second book of his ineffectually “refutes” a heretic of Hamburg. This gives something of a clue. In all likelihood, the Hamburg heretic was Uriel da Costa, for he fled to Hamburg after his first excommunication. Therefore, it does seem that in the first book as well, Judah Leon Modena referred to a specific heretic — not a fictitious camouflage — and that in all sincerity he intended to defend

Judaism but by reason of his shiftlessness never did get to completing the "defense" beyond the few pages. At all events, these two books of his reflect the presence in the seventeenth century of audacious critics of official Judaism and their individual recommendations for radical change.

Joseph Solomon del Medigo (1592-1655) of Crete, a descendant of Elijah del Medigo, could not find his place in the Judaism of his day. Educated by Galileo in Padua in the science of mathematics, and prepared in medicine as a vocation, he returned to Crete. At home, he discovered that his opinions were too liberal and that he expressed them too freely. The resultant hostility forced him from his home, to wander about the world. Abroad, he won success as a physician; and as a Jew he disapproved of rabbinism and the Cabala, but found Karaism attractive. Then in later years he transferred his profession from physician to preacher and with that changed to a friendly attitude to rabbinism and even wrote a book defending the Cabala.

This unsettled life and these shifting opinions evidence a deep dissatisfaction with the official Judaism. Individual lives were touched by the Renaissance, but Judaism was not: there lay the roots of the incongruity.

The most constructive, the most important and the most unimpeachable among the early critics of Judaism was Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). He was born in Amsterdam, of Marano parents who had just escaped from Portugal. In the Jewish communal school of Amsterdam he learned the views of ibn Ezra, Maimonides, and perhaps of Gersonides and Crescas: for a time he studied for the rabbinate. From non-Jewish sources Spinoza became acquainted with Latin, and the world of philosophy which a knowledge of Latin made accessible, being influenced particularly by the works of Descartes. These studies developed in him an independence of thought which the attempt at restriction on the part of the Jewish authorities could not subdue. His philosophical pursuits led him to religious doubts which in turn made him lax in the observance of Jewish laws. He was drifting from the

official Judaism of his day and found his contacts outside the Jewish circle.

To complete the break, the authorities of the Amsterdam synagogue, unable to persuade him to change his unorthodox opinions, declared him outside their society. This was in pursuance of the spirit of those times which did not favor the toleration of heretics, and also in keeping with the desire of the newly escaped Maranos to live a full Jewish life without any endangering complications which might reintroduce the poignantly remembered horrors of Spain. The officials could have spared themselves the trouble of pronouncing the ban because Spinoza, step by step, had long since withdrawn from the fold, so that when informed of the ban he commented that he had already excluded himself. His protest insisting on freedom of thought—"to take away the liberty to philosophize is to take away piety"—he elaborated into the great "Theologico-political Tractate" (1670) which he published anonymously, timid to admit authorship. In it he detailed the essence of his religious outlook and his estimate of Judaism. Then he left Amsterdam. During the remaining years of his life he worked as a grinder of lenses and also gave private instruction in philosophy, Latin and Hebrew, and in his final days he completed his volume on "Ethics." When he died he was buried in a Christian cemetery, although he had never officially accepted Christianity.

Spinoza wrote not for the masses but for the small minority of scholars. He sought no popularity. The caution and anonymity of his writings were intended to maintain his obscurity as well as to preserve his safety. Fate decided otherwise. By the Jewish leaders, as also by a Christian theologian (who turned Spinoza's Latin name, Benedictus, into Maledictus), Spinoza was censored as a heretic. The epithet "atheist" was hurled at him. After one hundred years of vituperation there followed seventy years of adulation, when he was welcomed as the God-intoxicated man. Only of late has his true significance been estimated in the story of Judaism and in the history of world philosophy.

What is Spinoza's position in Jewish thought? His system of philosophy shows abundant evidence of Jewish influence. The unity of God is a central doctrine. Nature and the universe are expressions of God. They are the result of God's Thought and Extension. Complete union with God is the goal of man; by attuning his will with the will of God man achieves the only real freedom. This is called mystical pantheism. But actually it is very close to the concept of the immanence of God as taught by the prophets and other Jewish thinkers.

Where Spinoza differed particularly was in his estimate of the Bible and of Jewish practice. He saw Judaism as a system of practical rules of conduct to which it demanded obedience; this system was an integral part of the Jewish state, but since the state ceased to exist the laws could no longer be compulsory. Philosophy to him was a progression to logic through knowledge, while prophecy made use not of reason but of stimulated imagination. To arrive at a fair appraisal of the nature of a prophet it was necessary to investigate the Bible itself, and Spinoza's whole approach to the Bible is indeed illuminating. Impressed apparently by ibn Ezra's intimations, Spinoza recognized in the Bible a tampered text, much overlapping and ambiguity, and an authorship other than that designated. He held, for example, that Moses was not the author of the Five Books of Moses, but that Ezra had composed the Books from Genesis through to the Book of Kings. This assumption, we know today, is only partially true, but it did anticipate, and in a sense it initiated, the modern science of historical criticism of the Bible which, a century and a half after Spinoza, brought upheaval to the Jewish religion, and to religion in general.

While Spinoza had no immediate effect upon the Judaism of his generation, he has received much attention from, and has given much inspiration to, Jews of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Had he lived in these later centuries he would have rallied to himself a following sufficient to produce a new creation in the Jewish religion. As it was, in Spinoza's own day the political, economic and educational

disqualifications prevented the mass of Jewry from participating in the enlightenment that Spinoza represented—they were not in a position to take advantage of his outlook—and the removal of those disqualifications was not possible until the end of the eighteenth century. Until then, Rabbinic Judaism, regardless of individual criticisms, remained the official and dominant religion.

### 30. THE ACCEPTED CODE OF ORTHODOXY

THE test of orthodoxy was adherence to an accepted and authoritative code which had reached its final formulation in the sixteenth century. Orthodoxy unquestionably had its value. It gave stability to Jewish life. This it needed after the severe shock of the Spanish Inquisition and the epidemic of expulsions.

The protracted legal accumulation of Rabbinic Judaism was given its last comprehensive codification by Joseph Caro (1488-1575). In his earlier years he had written "The House of Joseph" as a commentary to the codification—the Four Rows (Turim) arrangement of subjects—of Jacob ben Asher. That commentary, "The House of Joseph," gave the sources for all rabbinic quotations, a nerve-racking task which took twenty years to complete; then as an additional offering to the goddess of scholarly accuracy Caro gave twelve more years of his life to checking up on his findings. Realizing that this intricacy of scholarship would baffle the younger student and would thus lose its practical applicability, he abridged both the Code of Jacob ben Asher and his own commentary to produce a handbook of reference. To emphasize the ease with which his handbook of Jewish Law could be used, Joseph Caro gave it the symbolic title, "The Prepared Table" (Shulhan Aruk): the Law is set out ready for use, even as one may sit down to a prepared table, and eat.

The Shulhan Aruk appeared first in 1565 in Venice. The arrangement of the material follows the four divisions which Jacob ben Asher had introduced. It deals only with those laws and practices which still obtain among the Jews, after

the destruction of the Temple, whether they live in Palestine or elsewhere, those laws established by Biblical or rabbinic decree. The goal which Maimonides had held out for his "Mishneh Torah," that it be accepted by all Jewry as the practical guide for the religious life, was achieved instead by Joseph Caro; his and not Maimonides' codification gained universal acceptance because his, unlike that of Maimonides, gave the source for every decision, and for more detailed information the serious scholar could delve into the exhaustive volume, "The House of Joseph."

There is another reason for the wide acceptance of the Shulhan Aruk. Joseph Caro chose al-Fasi, Maimonides and Asher ben Jehiel as his three main authorities. Where there was a difference of opinion he was guided by the majority opinion, but since two of the three — al-Fasi and Maimonides — were Sephardim, and Caro himself was of Spanish origin, the practices would veer toward the Sephardic custom and would therefore meet with the criticism of the Ashkenazic Jews of France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Russia. In Poland and Lithuania especially was it important that this code be accepted. There, from the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, the Jewish population had increased from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand. There, during that century and a half, economic conditions favored an enhancement of religious study. There, Shalom Shakna popularized the method of intensive, hair-splitting study of the Talmud, which he had imported from southern Germany. This casuistic method, called *Pilpul*, produced great mental exercise but little help in the religious life. A simple codification, therefore, such as the Shulhan Aruk, was badly needed. To the Ashkenazic Jews, however, the Shulhan Aruk was deficient in that it did not take into account many of the decisions of the French Tosafists and many of the practices and customs of the German, Polish and Lithuanian Jews. If that codification could be supplemented in a way to overcome these omissions it would prove precisely the code required.

Moses Isserles (1530-1572), a son-in-law of Shalom Shakna, was just the one suited to write the supplement. Like his

older contemporary Joseph Caro, he wrote a commentary to Jacob ben Asher's "Four Rows," calling it "The Ways of Moses" (*Darke Mosheh*), in which he embodied criticisms of Caro's commentary to the same work. Then when the *Shulhan Aruk* appeared, Isserles penned critical annotations to it, giving the Ashkenazic customs and decisions. To round off the analogy, Moses Isserles called his supplementation "The Table Cloth" (*Mappah*), which every set table must have. These critical annotations were printed together with the *Shulhan Aruk* in 1578 and they have appeared thus ever since. The two form a unit. As a unit they are accepted by all Jews as the latest authoritative code of Rabbinic Judaism.

Commentaries and super-commentaries have been written; certain parts of Jewish ritual and certain departments of Jewish law have received later codification; but nothing has supplanted the work of Caro and Isserles. From the sixteenth century right into the twentieth century it has remained the comprehensive code embodying all the laws and practices observed by the adherents of Rabbinic Judaism.

### 31. MESSIANIC MIRAGE IN A STAGNANT GHETTO

THE religious life dictated by the annotated *Shulhan Aruk* was supplemented by many Jews with a devotion to the Cabala. The influence of the Cabala was distinctly supplementary, not contradictory, to Rabbinic Judaism. Joseph Caro himself had been able untiringly to concentrate on his gigantic task because of an inner compulsion which he derived from his mystical belief. His final residence, Safed, became a center of the Cabala. Men of great piety and spirituality congregated there. It was a mystical yearning that had drawn Caro to the Holy Land, to Safed in Galilee. So it attracted other souls equally responsive.

Among the great men of piety Isaac Luria (1534-1572) stood out as the greatest. "The Lion" (*Ari*) his followers called him. Born in Jerusalem, of German descent, he went as a child of eight to live with his well-to-do uncle in Cairo. Here he received prodigious instruction in the Talmud and

here he studied the Zohar, the "Bible" of the Cabalists. For several years he drank in its doctrines. His uncle provided him with a cottage on the Nile where his absorbing study would be undisturbed, so that he returned to his family only for the Sabbath. In this solitude he hoped to gain insight into the divine spirit. The conviction grew on him that he was a forerunner of the Messiah. Finding this conviction of his unpopular in Egypt he removed himself and his family to the more congenial atmosphere of Safed where he and those of kindred spirit dwelt together, separated from the rest of the world; occasionally they might make a pilgrimage to the grave of Simeon ben Yohai where they pictured him dictating the secrets of the Zohar.

With the encouragement of a following, Luria put some life into the Cabala which had become somnolent for more than two centuries. To explain creation, he taught that God the Infinite makes Himself finite by contracting Himself. That makes room for the emanation which goes through four phases of creation, and that divine light enters matter in various proportions. Luria brought the Cabala into man's own being—made it subjective. It is man's highest purpose, he said, to purify his soul from all that is evil, that it may ascend to the pure perfection in which it originated. Two means there are of purifying the soul. Its transmigration is one: a moderately pure soul rids itself of the dross by entering cruder matter, such as stones. The other means of purification is soul impregnation: the soul which death released from a nobler person is added in the one body to the soul with which one is born. In addition, through prayer and the practice of brotherliness and of certain religious functions the soul can be further purified. Thus Luria added the practical application to the theory of Cabala.

Luria composed not a single piece of literature on his teachings. They were transmitted and recorded by his ten or twelve immediate disciples who were completely won over to him. If Luria was the "Lion," they were accordingly the "Lion's Whelps"; the greatest ("Whelp") admirer and ex-



ponent of Luria's theories was Hayyim Vital (1543-1620) of an Italian family. Through his disciples, Luria's mystical ideas were carried all over Europe, to Turkey, Italy, Germany, Poland, Holland.

It is not to be imagined that many Jews actually understood the Cabala. They were simply impressed by it. What they were told to do, they did. With equal blindness, the tendency was all too strong to regard the spokesmen of the Cabala as saints. That is dangerous. It leaves an opening for charlatans. Sabbatai Zebi (1626-1676) saw this opening. Of Spanish ancestry, he was born in Smyrna. Tremendously impressed by Luria's exposition of the Zohar, he withdrew from society to live the ascetic life which would prepare him to receive the divine spirit. This was at a very early age. When only twenty he already had a group of young men as followers. His intellect, his voice, his very appearance attracted people to him. Even his father attributed his prosperity to his son's holiness; therefore he gave him every opportunity to continue as he saw fit.

The year 1648 was specified in the Zohar as the date for the appearance of the Messiah. Sabbatai was then only twenty-two years old. Privately he revealed himself to his disciples as the Messiah. As a special dispensation he allowed them to pronounce the awe-inspiring, ineffable, four-letter name of God. That was the long awaited sign that Israel's exile was ended. Unable to restrain Sabbatai, the rabbis of Smyrna, after putting up with his Messianic pretensions for three years, excommunicated him and with the help of the Turkish government drove him out. That did not daunt him: persecution is fuel to a Messianic flare-up. With his father's financial backing, Sabbatai wandered hither and yon. First to Constantinople. Then several years in Saloniki where he culminated his secret propaganda with a banquet at which he declared his marriage to the Torah and his identity as the Messiah, son of the Infinite. The rabbinic authorities of Saloniki saw to it that this banquet took on the unexpected significance of a farewell affair. On to Morea. Then to

Cairo, where he found some sympathy among the mystically-minded, and substantial help from a wealthy ascetic named Raphael Joseph Halabi.

1666 was the year a group of Christians expected the millennium. As the red-letter year was approaching, Sabbatai's propaganda accelerated. He came to Jerusalem to be on the spot where he could make full preparations. It must be said that even here he bewitched people with his personality. There was one whom he charmed in particular. Sarah, a Jewish girl of Poland, beautiful but half-crazed by the agonizing torture of the Polish pogroms, wandered all over—at the risk of her reputation—seeking the Messiah whom alone she would marry. She found Sabbatai and Sabbatai found her. He took her, regardless of her shady reputation, to be his queen in the coming days of the Messiah; Halabi arranged an elaborate wedding for the couple and he assured them an income. Sabbatai then obtained a prophet to proclaim his advent. The prediction duly made, as originating appropriately from a divine echo, the message was circularized to all the Jewish communities in all the countries. Then difficulties in Jerusalem sent Zebi on his way back to Smyrna. There, in one of the synagogues, on the New Year's Day, he was acclaimed the Messiah. Trumpets were blown; the congregation exclaimed: "Long live our King, our Messiah!" The excitement was frenzied. All restraint was thrown overboard. There was no need for restraint. A new world was being ushered in. Some fasted and castigated themselves; more feasted and indulged in license. Like a flame reaching out to wood long dried, so the great news leaped from country to country, reaching even to England, igniting the age-long expectation of the Messiah. Whichever rabbis dared oppose Sabbatai were deposed. Believers were put into office.

Sensing the dangers of defection in such frenzy, the Turkish authorities began to feel concerned. Sabbatai journeyed to Constantinople, either because he expected the obeisance of the sultan or because he was summoned, but, whatever his hopes, on arrival he was clapped into a fortress. To the be-

lievers this was but one stage in the program of the Messiah, a period of two years' suffering, after which he would emerge in full glory. The fortress metamorphosed into a hotbed of propaganda. From it Zebi sent out instructions that all the days which had been heretofore designated days of mourning should now be celebrated joyously, and of himself he spoke in divine terms. That was the climax!

The dénouement came rapidly. A Polish Cabalist who had been prophesying the advent of the Messiah, independent of any knowledge of Sabbatai, was ordered to consult with Sabbatai. After three days' discussion he concluded that Sabbatai was not genuine. This conclusion nearly cost the Cabalist his life; he fled to Constantinople and there he described the movement as an effort to depose the sultan, and to give veracity to his statement he temporarily took on the Mohammedan religion.

The Turks now thought it full time to act. And they acted on the advice of the sultan's court-physician — a convert — that to convert the Jews to Islam was better than to kill them. Of the alternative offered him, Sabbatai chose Islam. To give him the benefit of a doubt, it may be that he took this seemingly cowardly step to avoid the shedding of Jewish blood. We do know that for embracing Islam he was duly honored — as an inducement for others to follow his example. But they would not. They were bewildered. Some believed his betrayal a part of the Messianic program. Others conjectured that the Messiah had risen to heaven to return at a later date to effect the full salvation and that only a phantom of Sabbatai had become a Mohammedan. The phantom or whatever it was that continued to be called Sabbatai was shunned by the majority of Jews, even by his former followers. Some few adhered to him even now and founded a special sect of Jewish Mohammedans still in existence, called the Donmeh ("apostates"). Either because he could not convert greater numbers to Islam or because he again pretended to be a Messiah, the Turkish authorities sent him from Adrianople to Constantinople. Then, when they found him in Jewish company singing Psalms, they banished him

to Albania where there were no Jews. Here he ended his days, lonely and forsaken.

Sabbatai's death did not dissipate the Messianic mirage. Great expectations cannot so easily be made to vanish. Groups of emissaries still circulated the secret doctrine that the Messiah is bound to return. For over a hundred years his return was awaited. The atmosphere was still sufficiently charged for certain of Sabbatai's followers to gain credence for the claim that the soul of Sabbatai had entered into them and that now they were the Messiah.

Such a claim was made by Mordecai of Eisenstadt; he fasted, eleven days at a time (sometimes), and preached repentance, but he passed into oblivion.

Sabbatai's widow — not Sarah, but a later wife of his Islamic days — convinced her fifteen-year-old brother, Jacob Querido, that he was the heir of Sabbatai's Messianic body and soul. As such, he enjoyed all the license of life. The danger was sensed by the rabbis and they nipped it in the bud. They did not take Querido into custody for the sole reason that he and his four hundred followers had played for safety: they became Mohammedans, but practiced Judaism. When Querido died, his son was acclaimed the reincarnation of Sabbatai. Interesting is the coincidence that among the Mohammedans there is the like belief that the soul of Mohammed reappeared in Ali and his descendants.

The Querido group solidified itself with the Donmeh group as a separate sect in Turkey, marrying among themselves, maintaining the rite of circumcision, observing Sabbatai's birthday (the ninth of Ab) as a festival, praying partly in Hebrew, believing in reincarnation. The sect has continued its identity steadily, members viewing themselves as the faithful few and all the other Jews as unbelievers, yet maintaining their separateness from Islam. With secret tenacity have they held on, until a Sultan in the twentieth century gave them freedom to practice their religion openly. Living curiosities they are of the amazing story of Judaism.

A charlatan of some ingenuity capitalized on the momentum of the Messianic movement. Nehemiah Hayyun (1650-

1726) composed a Cabalistic tract supposed to have been written by Sabbatai, called "Secret of the Truth," which he joined with his own two commentaries under the complete title, "Truth of the All." He developed the idea that the Infinite (God) was constituted of three elements: the First Cause, the Holy Father, the Holy Ghost, "the three knots of truth"; of the trinity, he mentioned Sabbatai as the Holy Father. Some of the rabbis were taken in, but those expert in discovering swindles denounced Nehemiah and took the wind out of his sails. Although the Sephardic leader of Amsterdam fought in his behalf, Nehemiah's aims fell through.

From Poland a group of some fifteen hundred mystics made a pilgrimage to Palestine in 1700, to await the advent of the Messiah. They waited, prepared for the vicissitudes they had to endure. When their leader Judah the Hasid died, he was regarded as a saint. Hardships ultimately dispersed the group.

A gifted young poet of Padua, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (1707-1747), wrote a mystical commentary on the Pentateuch similar to the Zohar style, by what he took to be the revelation of an angel; that was enough to arouse suspicion, and extreme measures were taken to avoid another Messianic disturbance. So fanatic had the reaction against Sabbatai become that one brilliant Talmudist, Jonathan Eibeschutz (1690-1764), was wrongly accused of including references to Sabbatai in the amulets which he concocted for Cabalists, and he was undeservedly subjected to a nasty quarrel.

The last glimmer of the Messianic mirage centered about Jacob Frank (1726-1791) of Poland. From the Sabbataians in Turkey he learned to frown upon Jewish tradition and, more important, he learned the theory of reincarnation. He gave out the secret that in him were gathered the souls of the Messiahs who had preceded. Throughout the Balkan countries he traveled, picking up followers as he went. His beautiful wife did marvelously as recruiting agent. Trouble came inevitably and he repaired to Poland to lead disorganized Sabbataians. At this stage he exhibited a tendency toward Catholicism, teaching the Trinity and also that the

divine can assume human form. The rabbinic excommunication followed; Frank retaliated by pronouncing his belief publicly in the Trinity and his opposition to Rabbinic Judaism. This he did after he had reached the safety of Turkish territory. Moreover, he wrote the Catholic Bishop Dembowski that he preferred the Zohar because it contained reference to the Trinity and he demanded a public disputation with the rabbis. The outcome was that the Christian clergy burned the Talmud and reimbursed the Frankists for damages. When the bishop died the Frankists lost their support and Jacob Frank fled to Turkey where he—the former Trinitarian—posed as a Mohammedan.

The Frankists then intrigued with the canon Mikolski to hold a new disputation at Lemberg, in appreciation for which they would go over to Christianity. In the public sessions of disputation the rabbis won an easy victory. Jacob Frank demurred to approach the fount of baptism. For five years he dangled the promise. But that was his bargain: he could delay no longer. He and two thousand of his followers submitted to baptism. It was too much, however, to expect that to cure him of his intrigues. With Frank as the Messiah, the group practiced secret rites, claiming him as the incarnation of Jesus and seeking a territory of their own. That was more than the Polish government could tolerate. Frank was imprisoned for thirteen years and his two sons were brought up in a monastery, while his attractive daughter through dispensing personal favors of a dubious nature helped attract followers to the prison shrine. After his release he toured Moravia with his daughter, in grand style, and then when things became uncomfortable he settled in Germany as Baron Offenbach. Here he died. Here his daughter continued until 1817 when she ended her days in neglect and poverty. That closed the final chapter in the career of another false Messiah.

All the Messianic pretensions and the mystical hysteria, beginning with Sabbatai Zebi and ending with Jacob Frank, were disgraceful, revealing to some extent a certain deterioration in the spiritual life of the people, a deterioration inflicted

on them by the environment, a stagnant, ghetto environment surrounded by hostility. Unable to participate in the wider life of the day and despairing of any human assistance in their desire to breathe freely and to practice their religion freely—at best they were only tolerated, and never were they free and equal, masters of their own domain—they resorted to hope for superhuman aid.

At the same time, it should be realized that only a small proportion of the Jews were caught up in the Messianic frenzy. They might be counted in hundreds or thousands—but no more. The vast bulk of the people lived in accordance with the *Shulhan Aruk*, the most recent guide for their Rabbinic Judaism. The ability of the rabbinic leaders to cut away all excrescences and, amidst the turmoil, to preserve the true essence of Judaism is evidence of the vitality of Rabbinic Judaism.

### 32. RABBINIC JUDAISM ENDURES

It is indeed remarkable that from the beginning of the third century until the end of the eighteenth century, for a period of sixteen hundred years, the rabbinic presentment of Judaism dominated. The startling observation has been made (by George Foot Moore) that Judaism is the only religion, excepting Zoroastrianism with only about one hundred thousand followers, which has been able to survive out of all the religions which occupied the stage of human events in the Roman and Parthian empires prior to the beginnings of Christianity. Was it not because there was a vital reason for remaining a Jew? Was it not also because the rabbinic system of Judaism succeeded in preserving an all-encompassing unity in attitude and observance among the Jews dispersed widely over the world in most diverse environments?

Sinking its roots in the work of Ezra the scribe, in the fifth century B.C.E., it proceeded along a consistent line of growth, maturing into its standard expression as found in the *Mishnah*. Then it expanded into the *Talmud*; then the *Responsa* of the Geonim supplemented, the endless commentaries of the rabbis enriched, and the several codifications sys-

tematized Rabbinic Judaism, until it reached the most practicable codification of the Shulhan Aruk.

During this long course of years Rabbinic Judaism was many times challenged — by the destruction of the nation and the Temple, by the loss of homeland and independence, by the restriction of the freedom to accept proselytes, by the Sadducees and by the Karaites, by the philosophy of Hellenism, of the Kalamists, of the neo-Platonists, of the Aristotelians, by the rise of two powerful religions whose montheistic and ethical bases were derived from Judaism, by individual critics, by Messianic pretenders, and by gentile persecution.

All these trials Judaism survived. More — Rabbinic Judaism, in the process of surviving, gathered to itself added strength. The necessity of persevering all these centuries as primarily a religious community, self-sustaining and self-governing, produced a religion which was coextensive with life, which introduced ethical idealism into every last nook and corner of life's routine and precluded the secularization of any single event of life. Religion was the one instrument for self-expression and group-preservation. Therefore, it embraced within its compass all civil and criminal and domestic law, all morals, all sciences, all arts, all vocations and all avocations.

In this way the Jewish religion assimilated some of the cleansing logic of philosophy; it could not be a blind unquestioning faith. It absorbed some of the emotional warmth of mysticism; it could not be a cold belief. It assigned tangible duties for every hour of the day and for every day of the year; it could not be a weakened week-end religion. The necessity of defending itself against rival trends of thought — Hellenism and Karaism within, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam outside — forced a systematic consideration of the credal elements of the religion, the foundation of dogma upon which rests the entire ethical and ceremonial behavior of the Jew.

In each generation teachers arose to teach anew what was very old. In each generation teachers modified and adapted the religious requirements and regulations according to the



needs of that age and circumstance. Yet, with all these modifications, the basis remained undisturbed. In a philosophic environment the religion took on a philosophic mien. Maimonides epitomized the noblest of that era, and yet in a later generation he lost prestige, not because of any shortcoming in the intensity of, or fidelity to, his Judaism, but because the environment itself changed. It was no longer philosophic. Then Judaism took on new complexions. It appeared as mysticism. It appeared as legalism. It took on the color of the new environment. But the basis remained ever the same. That gave it its unity and its continuity.

### 33. ITS STRENGTH

WHAT is this unifying, integrating basis of Rabbinic Judaism?

The foundation of Rabbinic Judaism is the conviction that God revealed Himself to man, His character and purpose, His will as to what man should be and do, all in the Written Law of the Old Testament — the Torah. Between the second century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., the Bible came to be looked upon as complete and final, the special revelation of God to Israel, and through Israel to the world. In the words of the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10: 1): "He who holds that there is no Torah from Heaven forfeits his share in the world to come."

There is no question about the revelation. To Moses, God appeared directly and distinctly; to the other prophets His message came through a messenger or angel, through dreams and visions, through coherent and incoherent speech. All the characters of the Old Testament who communicated to their generations the direct message of God through His spirit, tradition designates as prophets, and that tradition counts forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses in Israel. Thus containing the words of those directly instructed by God, the Old Testament is considered inspired in a unique and supernatural sense. Once the prophet ceased, revelation ceased — forever. The Old Testament became a closed book. All that could be done thenceforth was to clarify the meaning

of Scripture and to apply its revelation for each generation. Even philosophy which employs logic in an independent pursuit of truth, even philosophy accepted the divine revelation to Moses and the prophets as eternally true and binding, and therefore Jewish philosophy remained safely within the bounds of Judaism.

It is challenging to speculate on why the Books of the Bible came to be considered as uniquely revealed. Why only those books? Why not equally good books, such as the Wisdom of Ben Sira? We know that there were prolonged debates as to which books should be included and which excluded? If the inclusion of some of them was the result of debate and human decision, is it not all the more remarkable that only those finally included should have been considered uniquely revealed? Whence arose the thought that the prophets and prophecy had come at a precise date to cease forever, that God would communicate directly with mankind until then, and not thereafter? In what essential regard did the prophets differ from the scribes or the rabbis? Each group sought to improve the nobility of life. How came the realization that one group prior to 200 B.C.E., or 100 C.E., was uniquely inspired, while the other two groups were just human interpreters of divine revelation? It is possible that the destruction of the Temple and the nation and the consequent exile deepened in the people a sense of sinfulness, that the destruction and the diaspora were punishment for gross sinfulness, and that they were therefore no longer worthy of direct revelation—that it was ended forever: no more would prophets appear. However, no thoroughgoing inquiry has yet been made and the discoveries of psychological and historical research in this regard will be interesting to know.

We do know that the rabbinic belief in the divine revelation of Scripture is fundamental in the entire superstructure of Rabbinic Judaism. It is the authority. It compels obedience. God has spoken; man must obey. If it is revealed, every word of Scripture is equally valuable in making known to man the ways of God and what God requires of man. The meaning is sometimes clear, visible on the surface, so

that anyone who reads may understand; sometimes it is abstruse and hidden, comprehended only by those who can see the meaning beneath the surface. If it is revealed, then no dictum in the Bible is too trivial for man's obedience, since it is the expressed behest of God. Rabbinic Judaism is thus nomistic, that is, established on God-given Law.

Looked upon in this fashion, the Bible is necessarily perfect and necessarily a unit. There can be no contradictions; there can be no superfluities. Nothing is accidental; nothing is omitted. There can be no modification; there can be no new testament of God. His revelation to Moses and the prophets is perfect and final, for all time.

Yet it is impossible to say that Rabbinic Judaism teaches precisely the same as Biblical Judaism. Even with the theory of revelation so final and complete, the human soul aspires onward. Rabbinic Judaism, as the Oral Law, is theoretically the natural interpretation of the Written Law (the Bible) — theoretically the natural extension in unchanged form, but by force of practical circumstances a changed and improved and progressive expression of Judaism.

The religion of the Bible was held inviolate. Time, however, demands change. Conditions change. Social structures move on. From a pastoral and agricultural people the Jews became city-dwellers, or tradesmen adventuring to distant markets; no longer a nation in Canaan, they became suppressed religious minorities in the communities of the world.

How could the Biblical religion, arising from Biblical backgrounds, suffice? It did not take a long time to find the way out. Devices of interpretation presented themselves which made possible the improvement on inadequate, inferior and outworn teachings, while yet retaining the theory of the perfection of the Old Testament. Through these devices, which oftentimes border on casuistry, the rabbis selected from the amalgam of the Old Testament those which they considered the higher teachings and featured them rather than the inferior teachings, and in some interpretations advanced beyond the Biblical level — all along, though, maintaining that the superior values were really contained in the God-revealed

Bible. Sometimes it was merely a matter of the proper distribution of emphasis, for difference in emphasis can change the entire character of a thought.

On those rare occasions when it seemed necessary to set aside the Pentateuchal laws and no suitable exegetical device could be found, the justification was found in Psalm 119, verse 126: "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void Thy law." This verse is made to mean "It is time to do something for the Lord," and what indeed is more valuable than refurbishing the law of the Lord?

As a last resort, one could always resort to allegory. If one no longer believed in angels, he could designate them as allegorical for the purpose of mental perception — as did certain of the Jewish philosophers. The word "allegory" means etymologically "saying something else," and through allegory one may say much that is not in the Bible. As when striking a rock, we find stated in the Midrash, a hammer produces many sparks, so God by one word may mean many things. Man must search and find. Maimonides, with the same thought in mind, compares the Torah to a golden apple in silver network: those who stand afar off can only see the silver network; those with greater insight espy the fine gold within.

Even as inferior teachings were ignored, so new accretions gradually made their way into the rabbinic religion without breaking the continuity, as long as they could be linked in some way to the Bible. Once they were read into the Bible, those innovations acquired all the supernatural sanction of the Bible: thus was it possible to introduce valuable customs of individual and social behavior and to make obedience to them obligatory.

Such innovations, of course, could gain entrance only through properly constituted authorities. During the rabbinic period the nature of the religious authorities varied from time to time as conditions allowed. At first it was the Sanhedrin, then the patriarch, the ordained rabbis, those recognized as masters in scholarship, the Geonim, the Codes, safeguards to the Law of Scripture, long-established tradition,

compelling reason, the force of custom. Of the decrees that were enacted, the prohibitions were designated as "gezerot," and the positive ordinances as "takanot." Whether introduced by an individual or by a council, the justification was always a word or verse in the Bible. Revealed religion demanded that. Thus, although revealed, the religion could progress. And although the religion had changed to the extent that of the six hundred and thirteen religious duties derived from the Bible, one authoritative book of the Middle Ages (Sefer ha-Hinnuk) enumerates only two hundred and seventy as being still in force—the vast number of ceremonial laws of the Talmudic Orders, Zeraim, Kodashim, Tohorot and most of Moed, having been nullified by the newer ways of living—the religion remained basically the same, revealed.

Moreover, the rabbis make more specific and more detailed the requirements of Judaism and therefore make religion more a matter of the daily life. The simple rules of the Bible may have sufficed for the simple life of the earlier generations. Even where details were not given, everyone must have understood what was expected. But a religion that was to guide the conduct for groups near and far, engaged in all manner of occupation, required specific elaboration. For instance, the prohibition in the Bible with regard to working on the Sabbath is coercive, yet undefined. After all, what constitutes work? Is walking, work? Is riding, work? The Talmudic literature probes into the minutest detail to define what constitutes work. This is most valuable in the building up of a practical religion.

Nearly everyone agrees with the general virtues, nearly everyone will admit without argument that goodness and truth and social justice are desirable elements in the religious life, but there is little unanimity as to what constitutes goodness in specific situations, or which method is the most desirable in the achievement of social justice; in the matter of social justice, for example, can it be achieved through socialism, through a limited monarchy, through communism, through fascism, or through democracy—there are honest devotees of each one of these political orders, all of them

strive for social justice, and yet in the specific translations of their efforts they may be actually producing the very opposite of what they desire. General ideals in religion have some value: they provide healthy motivation. But that is only half; in addition to motivation must be the detailed application. There must be ample illustration to make a vivid appeal for emulation. There must be specific minutiae to hallow the manifold diurnal duties. This is what the rabbinic complement provides. That is one of the distinctive features of Judaism in its maturity.

In a religion which supports itself on a direct revelation from God, there is obviously no room for argument as to whether God exists. "Everything is in the power of Heaven except the fear of Heaven" (Talmud: Berakot 33 b). Before all else, God must be accepted. According to the rabbis, therefore, God shows His presence through His revelations to the prophets, and in holy Scripture he instructs mankind how to discern His presence in nature and history. It is not so much the theoretical belief in God that matters but rather the demonstration of that belief or disbelief as evidenced in the character of one's conduct. By not hearkening to the word of the Lord, by not obeying all His commandments, one denies "the root"—the belief in God (Lev. 26:14). The emphasis on "doing" is valuable for all time. A philosophical acquiescence as to the existence of God means little if it has no effect upon one's attitude and conduct. The detached and unapplied belief in God certainly has no place in Judaism. Constantly in one's inner thought must be the challenge: does the existence of God make any difference to me? does it mean that I must never despair? does it mean that my efforts for what is good and true will find support in the larger world about me? does it mean that all men of all races are my brothers? God exists—and one must act accordingly.

The existence of One God—that is central. He revealed to man the way of life: that is the first premise. This revelation is contained in Scripture. Here we have the nucleus of Rabbinic Judaism. Everything grows out of it. Variations enter in the understanding and interpretation of the

divine revelation. There is no one theological system. Israel Abrahams in his volume, "Judaism" (p. 6),\* summarizes well in these words: "In the Jewish theology of all ages we find the most obvious contradictions. There was no attempt at reconciliation of such contradictions; they were juxtaposed in a mechanical mixture, there was no chemical compound. The Jew was always a man of moods, and his religion responded to those varying phases of feeling and belief and action."

Nevertheless, certain well-defined conclusions were accepted from a perusal of God's revelation in Scripture. Foremost is the choice of Israel. All the Old Testament speaks of Israel as having been chosen by God. Within the Bible itself there are variations as to what that choice implies, but the culmination of it all is that Israel was not chosen as a pet people but rather to fulfill a self-sacrificing mission, namely, through pain and persecution to bring to the world-at-large the truth that the One God is the God of all mankind.

No greater force to preserve the Jew could there be than this concept of the choice of Israel. The torture of persecution could not tear apart the Jewish group. If God revealed His purpose in Scripture — and no one would doubt that — and if Scripture designates the choice of Israel, then persecution becomes but one item in the divine program for the universe. What is more important is the obligation upon the Jew to study day and night, to explore deeply into God's message to man, to obey and perform all the duties which God has assigned, to live such a life as to lead all humanity to the recognition of the God of Israel whom all the world should revere and obey. Steadfast loyalty to this mission, even at the price of pain, is worth everything. It is service to God. It ennobles life here on this earth and it earns a reward in the realm beyond. To use the words of the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10:1): "All Israel have a share in the world to come." And even in the terrestrial world, God will in His own good time effect a national restoration of Israel, a release from oppression, and then all nations of the earth will appre-

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ciate that for their sake did Israel suffer and therefore all the greater will be Israel's glory. . . With this trend of reasoning accepted as indisputably true, could there have been a more powerful factor for the preservation of the Jew and his religion?

"Faith" signifies not simply faith in God's existence, but confidence in God's actions.

That confidence in divine justice overflowed into Messianic outlets. God would assuredly restore the people to the ancient homeland and the deserved glory; if natural means of restoration seemed remote the Jew would not despair, for the Almighty can invoke supernatural aid. The Messiah *will come*. On the basis of intimations in the Book of Daniel or in other Biblical passages, or by means of numerical decoding of significant words arranged in anagram or acrostic form or transposed, or by comparing the duration of the First and Second Exiles with the prolonged Third Exile, or by analyzing the starry formations in the heavens, generation after generation of Jews throughout the Middle Ages sought to calculate the date for the promised Messiah. When the fixed date arrived, there were ever those who made claim to Messiahship. Disappointment and dejection invariably followed, yet the hope never diminished. God is just!

While not minimizing the values of life on earth, Rabbinic Judaism brings the life of the world beyond into a prominence unknown in the Bible. Expressive of the Biblical attitudes is the verse (Job 14:12): "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep"; in that case the entire problem of right and wrong, of sorrow and joy, must be worked out in terms of this life. If the immediate future looked hopeless, the prophets of the Bible could point to the "Day of God" when the wrong would be righted. The Talmud defers that "Day of God" to the world beyond. Herein lies one of the most essential modifications of the Bible religion. With reward and punishment in the resurrected life, the ways of God cannot be properly accounted for without taking into full account what awaits man in the hereafter. Life here



determines man's share in the hereafter. If the righteous suffer here, it is that their share of joy may be all the greater in the hereafter. When death comes, the righteous have nothing to fear; the wicked may well stand in awe of death, for to them will come the consequences of their evil deeds.

What brought about this entire theology of the world beyond? Possibly it was the crumbling of the empires which the rabbis witnessed in the early centuries of the present era and the consequent realization of how ephemeral things are here on this earth. Possibly it emerged from the struggle between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Possibly it resulted from the endless postponement of the "Day of God." However it originated, it did give a consistent and complete picture of life and a logical solution to the problem of evil. It made willing martyrs to the cause of Israel. It made the Jew feel the worthwhileness of scrupulously adhering to the requirements of Judaism.

At the same time, emphasis on the world beyond did not make of Judaism an other-worldly religion. This life was not to be scorned. The manner in which one lived his earthly life determined his lot in the supramundane realm. Here on this earth the material things were to be enjoyed as God's gifts, and long life was to be desired. The thought of salvation in a world beyond tended rather to the enumeration of duties that man must perform, here and now, in order to merit salvation. These religious duties or rules of conduct coming from God, known as *Mizwot*, are special characteristics of Judaism. They include the moral and the ceremonial, the prohibitions and the demands for performance—totaling six hundred and thirteen.

Other characteristic developments in Rabbinic Judaism grow out of the amplification of the God idea. It represents quite an advance in thought to have conceived of God as acting upon each individual according to each one's strength. In other words, God accommodates His demands to the receptive power of the individual. In this presentation of the way of God we have an approach which does much to individualize God. His love is for each one. His revelation is for each

one. Each human being has the stamp of Adam. It is as though the world were created just for himself: correspondingly serious is each man's responsibility as to his conduct.

In addition to individualizing God, the rabbis also spiritualized God. No one knows the place of God in the world, even as no one knows the place of the soul in the body. "When you pray, realize before whom you stand" (Berakot 28 b). Pray with "Kawwanah," that entire surrender to God, in which all else disappears. Whatever the terms we use to describe God apply personally to man, to direct man's conduct. If God is described as ubiquitous, it is to impress upon man that none can escape Him; if God is described as one, it is that He alone is sovereign of men's affairs; if God is described as omnipotent, it is that nothing can avert His decrees. The sum total of all His attributes is expressed in the words Justice and Mercy. And the seal of God is Truth.

The strong moral sense in all of the rabbinic literature is striking. Magnificent is the concept of Kiddush ha-Shem. Deriving the thought from Exodus 19:18, the rabbis evolved the far-reaching idea that God needs Israel. His honor is involved in the behavior of Israel. "When you Israel are my witnesses, then I am God; when not, I am not God" (Yalkut Shimoni: Jethro). If one of Israel, a witness to God's existence, lives worthily, he accords honor to the name of God (Kiddush ha-Shem) — meaning, that people will by that action see that the Lord is the true God, and that individual, worthy life will to that extent bring nearer the day when all mankind will serve God. Conversely, if an Israelite lives unworthily, he discredits the name of God (Hillul ha-Shem). Convinced in his own heart that this is so, what a mighty power for righteous conduct the appreciation of Kiddush ha-Shem is to the Jew. Sooner any sacrifice than to defile God's name! And is not that, indeed, the truest standard of religion, to judge it by the lives of those who practice it?

In subtle shades and nuances of ethical distinctions the rabbis advance the religion of the Jew. This is particularly noticeable in the many precautions to spare one's "feelings."

In charity, spare the sensibilities of the recipient. Refrain from peddling gossip. While emphasizing that intention counts, the rabbis at the same time reprove actions which might give wrong impressions even though the intentions be commendable. Delving more deeply than does the Bible into motives for ethical living, the rabbis evaluate higher and lower motives, beginning with the desire for reward and the fear of punishment as the lowest common denominator in man's behavior, and finding more pleasing to God the doing of virtue for virtue's sake (*Lishmah*) or for the sake of God (*I'Shem Shamayim*), and realizing too that obedience to God's Law prompted by a lower motive may in time lead to a response to higher motives. In the very performance of a religious duty there is pleasure (*Simhah shel Mizvah*) regardless of all else. Every relationship in life, in business, in the family, in charity, in society, everything is hallowed by a delicate ethical approach, such as is consistent with living in accord with the wishes of a God of love, truth, justice and peace. There is no single uniform ethical system; but, more important in translating ideals into people's lives, there are volumes and volumes of varieties of ethical statements and illustrations, enriching the one theme of serving God. Many moral relations, in fact, are left to the guidance of the individual conscience (*Masur la-Leb*), for the God-conscious conscience can do no wrong.

Sin, it follows logically, is a violation of the revealed will of God. The rabbis sense the stubborn nature of sinfulness. There is in man an inborn inclination (*Yezer*) to good and to bad. The inclination to bad is strangely indispensable; without it, for example, there would be no repopulation or civilization. There is no such thing as original sin. There is simply the inclination to good or bad. The course to follow is to sublimate the evil propensity, to tame it and sanctify it. That can be done by exercising the impulse for good, by prayer, by clinging closely to the Law of God, and beyond that, God will help, for a marvellous power comes from God to aid the powers for good, but not for bad.

Ignorance is close to sin. The *Am ha-Arez* (*ignoramus*)

is the target for much rabbinic scorn. The discouraging characteristic of sin is its increasing domination, once one gets into its clutch: "At the beginning sin is like a thread of a spider's web, but in the end it becomes like a ship's cable" (Midrash: Gen. Rabbah 22:11). It is a sad observation that sin leads to further sin, and sinners make sinners of others. The very worst sins are: heathenism, unchastity, homicide. The worst punishment is not alone the evil consequence of sin in this world but the denial of the right to share in the world to come. The doctrine of immortality is thus highly significant in the control of human conduct, a control which was not operative in Biblical days.

Powerful as is the tendency to sin, so great is the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is a radical change in one's attitude or behavior. One abandons the evil he has done and fortifies himself against the temptation to sin once more in the same way. Repentance means, furthermore, that if he has wronged a fellow-man he must make reparation, and if he has offended God he must atone through good works, mainly charity. If it leads to penitence, suffering may expiate sin. The Day of Atonement helps. The virtue of a saintly man may be transferred to benefit a sinner (Zekut). The grace of God is an added factor in the forgiveness of sin, for God forgives by reason of His own goodness. It is obvious that throughout rabbinic literature there is no fatalism. The door is always open to God and goodness.

In a revealed religion the ceremonial observances are ordained by God even as are the ethical duties, and they must be honored whether or not the reason for them is understood or understandable. These ceremonial observances are the visible signs of a Jew. Circumcision, the Sabbath, the New Year's Day of Judgment, and the Day of Atonement, the Festivals of Passover, Tabernacles and Pentecost, the minor feasts of Hanukkah and Purim, the public fasts, the dietary laws, and the laws of personal hygiene and appearance — these are the major observances in Rabbinic Judaism, with the manner of observance minutely delineated.

The two main institutions of Rabbinic Judaism were the synagogues and the schools, both closely associated. The synagogue was the center of Jewish life. It was the house of worship, the house of study, and the house of assembly. As the house of study, it stood for a program of educating the entire people: a knowledge of God's revealed will, and the benefits which derive from that knowledge, could come only through study. This educational function of the synagogue gave to Rabbinic Judaism the distinctive quality of being a religion dedicated to the education of the masses. As a house of assembly, the synagogue was the social center: around it the Jewish community grew; in it Jews made their social contacts; no social endeavor was sanctioned unless it had the religious flavoring of the synagogue; it was not thought irreverent to use it for all kinds of announcements—lost and stolen articles, claims and grievances, new ordinances and regulations—which by non-Jews were ordinarily announced in the public squares and market places; from the synagogue charity was dispensed, orphans and widows were relieved, dowries were provided for poor girls, personal service was given. Until the eighteenth century the synagogue stood out as the most notable institution of Judaism. As a focal center for the community it contributed as much as any other factor toward the unified endurance of Judaism.

Rabbinic Judaism had the power to live on. Both the theoretic basis and the outward practice were such as to enable the religion to persevere anywhere, under any conditions—and indeed to grow.

If the test of religion consists in what it accomplishes towards enriching the individual lives of each generation, then Rabbinic Judaism was outstandingly successful in the lives of many generations of Jews throughout the Middle Ages.

## CHAPTER III

### *HOW A RELIGION FACES THE FUTURE*

#### [CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM]

##### I. THE HEDGE AND THE GATE

IN rural England it is a favorite custom to erect a gate and railing to surround one's home and to plant a hedge adjacent to the railing and continuous with it. This arrangement of parallel barriers resembles the double fence which enclosed Rabbinic Judaism. The regulative ramifications which the rabbis planted about the Torah were the hedge, and the ghetto walls which the gentile world built about the Jew were the railings. The rabbinic hedge and the ghetto gates — both confined the Jew to a unified and autonomous religious life which remained almost unchanged for a period of sixteen hundred years.

A satisfying religious life it was. No outside influence could creep in to instigate discontent. The two-fold barrier was there, encasing the Jewish community, shielding it from foreign causation. Nothing short of certified truth the rabbis offered with the Bible and their enlargement upon the Bible. It was revealed truth, the word of God. Though all else crumble, this remains, to guide man's every step in the path of life. The Renaissance carried within itself those forces which might upset this all-encompassing, wholly satisfying rabbinic religion. No fear of that, so long as the ghetto gates reinforced the rabbinic hedge. How could the disturbing doctrines of the reawakened Humanism disturb the Jew if they could not reach him within the walls of the ghetto?

Here and there, now and then, a Jew vaulted over the ghetto gates and he immediately found himself outside the

hedge as well. So it had been with Spinoza. Not all the Jews had it in them to vault the barrier. As long as the gates remained, the hedge would likewise remain intact. But what if the gates were removed? Would the hedge then be trampled down in the stampede to break loose?

## 2. WITHIN THE HEDGE: HASIDIM AND MITNAGGEDIM

IN those countries, of course, where the ghetto gates were carefully guarded this likelihood did not enter. In the populous Jewish centers of Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, Roumania, Rabbinic Judaism as prescribed in the Shulhan Aruk prevailed. In these countries, if Rabbinic Judaism threatened to become too dry or too formal or too scholastic, that did not result in an attempt to overthrow it. Rather did it call forth an emotional urge to supplement it with the needed tonic of mystical experience. The tonic effects of mysticism in religion brought vigor to the Judaism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That revival of Jewish mysticism is known as Hasidism.

Hasidism goes back to the Cabala, particularly to Isaac Luria's exposition of it, for much of its system. Primarily, though, Hasidism is more an enthusiasm than a system. Israel Baal Shem Tob (1700-1760) — Besht for short — was the innovator of this modern enthusiastic mysticism. Even as a child, to lose himself in a forest and to feel the exhilaration of mother nature he preferred to the stodgy brilliance of the Talmudic classroom. But he was an orphan, and for an orphan life all too soon imposes serious obligations. At the age of twelve, Besht took on work as an assistant to a Hebrew teacher and it was his duty, among other things, to conduct the children to the synagogue and there to intone the prayers with them. His own study he carried on in the still of the night, secretly. Secretly, because he despised the airs of superiority the learned assumed; to avoid the slightest suspicion of intellectual ostentation he did everything in his power to create the impression of honest simplicity. This deliberate concealment of intelligence was so successfully

accomplished that, after marriage, his newly acquired brother-in-law was truly grieved by Besht's seeming lack of learning and, to avoid family disgrace, packed the young couple off. The ejected couple selected a site in the Carpathians. There Besht toiled at digging lime and his wife carted it to town. Thus Besht earned his livelihood, an honest one at all events. And, indeed, it brought him close to his beloved nature.

Living among the peasants, Besht acquired a knowledge of the healing herbs. His efficacious prescriptions and amulets brought him fame as a healer of the sick. It was in that way that he won the coveted designation, Baal Shem Tob — Master of the Good Name, one who effects miraculous cures in the name of God. No miracle worker was he, no charlatan nor medicine man. Messianic pretensions did not turn his head, as they did Sabbatai's; they did not as much as enter his head. His real goal was to heal the souls of his people. He knew what was lacking. Spirituality had become spiritless. Too much intellect and not enough emotion. What was the simple soul to do, who had no learning, who could not penetrate the pages of the Talmud, and yet who wanted to experience God in life? Baal Shem Tob could show the way to God.

From all over Galicia people journeyed to this great personality for advice. Simple folk drank in his cheer and comfort. In this manner, in the final eleven years of his life, Besht laid the foundations of the Hasidic movement. He wrote no books. Mainly through his epigrams and his parables, as collected by his disciples, can we discern his teachings. True, he could hold his own against any of the contemporary Talmudists, but Besht was neither a trained theologian nor what is generally known as a philosopher. Rather through his personality did he teach — and is not that the most telling means of bringing religion into human lives? What is more compelling than the example of a living hero?

The whole emphasis of Hasidism is on "inward" religion. God is present everywhere. He dwells in the heart of man and in every object, no matter how trivial or inconsequential it appears. The world is full of God's vitality and spirit. Everything is part of God. There can be no separation of



matter from spirit. Everything that occurs is from God. Everything that occurs is for the best — that is God's providence.

Man must strive constantly to hold communion with God. He must pull away the veil which divides man from God: the two must merge. This communion is brought about in a special manner, through prayer. Not ordinary formal prayer, but prayer charged with ecstatic fervor. Heated prayer — burning up with prayer ("hitlahabut") — nothing less will do. Concentration on the thought of joining with God must be so intense as to make one forget that he has a body. That takes effort. If necessary, the familiar means of mechanical stimulation should be employed: closing the eyes, swaying the body, dancing, singing, shouting. Never mind the grins of onlookers. By means of prayer, man effects changes in all the universe. So necessary is prayer that man's ability to keep alive without prayer is nothing short of miraculous. Equally miraculous is the recuperative power of the soul to survive the tremendous intensity of communion with God.

There is no single stereotyped technique in the worship of God. Whatever means one has at his disposal he should use. One need not be a sage to pray. Besht tells of an ignorant shepherd lad who, when taken to the synagogue on the holiest day of the religious year, was overcome with an urge to open his heart to God, but he was not sufficiently learned to pray. He had to do something. In the crowded synagogue, during the hush of an awesome moment, the lad could no longer restrain himself. From his pocket he yanked out a reed-pipe; he put it to his lips and on it he sounded a shrill blast. Consternation swept through the entire congregation — all but Besht. "This impulsive act," he defended, "took the place of prayer. The simple lad served God in the only way he knew. God wants the devotion of the heart; to Him this tune was more acceptable than formal prayer."

Humility is a desirable virtue, but no one should feel that he is so lowly that God will not stoop to listen to his prayer. At any time, in any place, the Almighty will hearken to

prayer. Even in a room filled with people, a man can feel that he is alone with his God. Concentration on his devotion to the divine is all that is necessary. So valuable is the ability to concentrate that it would be well for man to exercise the power of concentration each and every day on some one thought.

Not only in prayer, but in every smallest performance man worships God. This is necessarily so, since God is present even in the most trivial object. When eating and drinking one may sense the presence of the divine; the table is an altar to God. The synagogue is the most appropriate place, therefore, to partake of the sanctified Sabbath afternoon meal, sanctified through comradeship and the joyous chanting of Psalms. "Serve the Lord with gladness," receives a new emphasis in Hasidism; this oft-repeated emphasis on joy in worship is in decided opposition to Luria's Cabalistic advocacy of doleful castigation. From the standpoint of Hasidism, one should refrain from tears, unless they be tears of joy. Life is bright and happy because God pervades it: life should be thoroughly enjoyed.

Whatever evil there is, is man-made. When God created the world He saw that it was good. Therefore, whoever deprecates this world is sadly in error: it is for him to learn how to use properly the opportunities in life. This is to be learned not exclusively from the Torah, but from life itself. Anything can be learned from everything. All experiences, pain and suffering even, are God's messengers carrying a special message to the human mind. As one who knows a king intimately and all his characteristics will recognize him even when the king is disguised, so one who knows God will find Him in all forms—yes, present in scoffers and heretics too. Even the basest of souls may still harbor the one vital spark of divinity; until this last spark is extinguished, there is hope.

The other extreme, the extreme of constant saintliness and attachment to God, produces a new type of person—a higher form of creation—the Zaddik. He possesses the gift of prophecy and the influence to obtain miracles. Not through

learning but through prayer and mental concentration on God does he achieve his greatness. To achieve perfection in prayer and mental concentration is a full-time occupation. The ordinary individual must spend his time earning a living. Therefore, if a saintly man does devote himself completely to the supreme aim of life—concentrated communion—he should be released from life's ordinary occupations, through the generosity of the community. It is in the power of the saintly Zaddik, and in his power alone, through his talk and action to raise the rank and file of Hasidim to a higher level. It is in his power, too, to intervene with nature in behalf of his people so as to wrest from nature her miraculous cures.

These teachings of Hasidism received fuller development under Besht's numerous disciples. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye became its literary spokesman. At first a great Talmudist, and a doubter so far as Hasidism was concerned, he later joined the movement because of the possibilities he saw in it. This transfer of allegiance meant a considerable sacrifice, the loss of two rabbinical positions and the scourge of unpopularity, but the strength of his conviction endured it all.

The more popular though less literary leader was Dob Baer of Meseritz. He drew numerous disciples from Galicia and southern Poland. As his contribution to the perpetuation of the Hasidic movement, he took over the Sephardic prayer-book of Isaac Luria, the ritual known as Nusah ha-Ari, and adapted it for the devotees of Hasidism.

When the Hasidim had aroused determined opposition, particularly in Lithuania where Talmudic study remained popular and where anti-Hasidic Elijah, called the Gaon of Wilna, enjoyed a tremendous influence, Shneor Zalman of Liadi came to the fore as chief defender. In his defense, Shneor Zalman sought to combine philosophic ideas with Hasidism, to make it more rational and more speculative, as a corrective to the southern distortion of the movement which came to consider the Zaddik a miracle-man instead of a religious teacher. The term "Habad" is symbolic of the three Hebrew words meaning "wisdom, understanding, knowl-

edge," and therefore this intellectual branch of Hasidism was designated as Habad. Further in the direction of combining mysticism with traditional study, Shneor Zalman added to the Shulhan Aruk—the accepted code of orthodoxy—the ideas of Cabalism and Hasidism, and this combination he published in a book which the Hasidim took as their authoritative religious guide in place of the unadorned Shulhan Aruk.

Mitnaggedim ("opponents") was the name given the anti-Hasidim. The beloved Wilna Gaon, Elijah (1720-1797), was the arch opponent. Judging the Hasidim as no better than strayed followers of Sabbatai, he in 1772 proclaimed a ban against them. This led to attack and counter-attack, and consolidated the Hasidic adherents. In 1781 the ban was reissued with greater vigor, and copies of a Hasidic book which accused the rabbis of lacking spirituality, because of the blinding, dialectic Pilpul, were publicly burned. Impassioned episodes grew out of the struggle, particularly after the time Poland was divided up and a large share was placed under the Czar's rule. On two occasions Shneor Zalman was arrested, but a Russian uprising and a change of dynasty gave him his freedom.

In 1804 Hasidism was permitted by law in Russia, and that was the signal for the followers to erect their own synagogues and to organize their own communal life. They made great headway in southern Poland and Galicia. But also, in the height of its power, Hasidism went wrong. The Zaddikim had made a business of it. They demanded extravagant fees for their miraculous cures and with the income thus derived they paraded a great show of splendor, surrounding themselves with an entire entourage. The more sincere leaders of Hasidism naturally objected. A great grandson of Besht, Nahman of Bratzlaw, realized that many of the Zaddikim gained a following on their reputation rather than on real achievement. "Satan knew how hard it was to lead people astray all by himself," he said, "so he set up Zaddikim to help him." But the decay which had set itself up in the movement could not be allayed.

The nineteenth century saw only deterioration in the Hasi-

dic movement. True, it had brought joy and spirituality into the drab and gloomy life of East European Jewry, but the exaggeration of some of the teachings, especially a distortion of the concept of the Zaddik, proved the nemesis of Hasidism. It had become increasingly necessary to resort to artificial means to stimulate ecstasy. Among the ignorant, ignorance had been made a virtue. Deterioration indeed! But greater than the internal breakdown of Hasidism was the external pressure to which it was subjected towards the end of the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century. The Hasidim as well as the Mitnaggedim, both were confronted by the challenge of a new heaven and a new earth.

### 3. AN ATTACK UPON THE GATES

IN Western Europe and in America the gates of the ghetto had already been opened up. These barriers removed, the full effect of modernism and Humanism was rapidly invading the Jewish community.

So long as the gates remained closed and firmly locked there was no danger to the Talmudic hedge. Signs that the gates of the ghetto were destined to be opened made their appearance during the second half of the seventeenth century. (In the history of the Jew, it was the eighteenth century that brought the delayed closing of the Middle Ages.) In Holland, England and Turkey, there was tolerance; in the Germanic countries, in France, in Spain, there was persecution. But from then on pogroms appeared less frequently in Western Europe, tolerance extended its boundaries, Jewish culture began to revive.

What were the causes? The non-Jewish world was changing its attitude to the Jew. Enlightened people were being impressed by his very survival. They called the Jew: "The Divine Miracle." To have survived so long and in the face of such obstacles—here was the miraculous working of the divine. Book-men who read that marvel in the history of the Jew pleaded for a better treatment of the Jew.

In addition, Christians began to study Hebrew literature.

Some did this to attack the Jew and Judaism, but many more had developed a keen appreciation for the Hebrew language and literature, which they undertook to translate into Latin and French. A Dutch scholar, Willem Surenhuis, translated the entire Mishnah with the commentaries of Maimonides and Bertinoro into Latin; it was his intention to translate all of the rabbinic literature, an understanding of which seemed to him necessary for a better understanding of the New Testament. A French Protestant, Jacob Christian Basnage, wrote the "History and Religion of the Jews from Jesus to the Present Day to Supplement Josephus and Continue it to the Present Day," in which he presented a sympathetic view of the life and vicissitudes of the Jew. Johann C. Wolf, professor of oriental languages at Hamburg, composed four volumes of the *Bibliotheca Hebraica*. Other Christian scholars described Jewish customs, Jewish ceremonies, synagogue Services. The age of Humanism had set in, its effects reaching into every department of human relations, including those of Jew and non-Jew.

The enlightened attitude was making itself felt by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The matter of removing the barriers of the ghetto was, however, a slow and exasperating affair; therefore, ambitious Jews were driven to the alternative of vaulting over the gates of the ghetto as the one means of entering the post-Renaissance culture. That was the problem of that age. It is personified in the outstanding man of the age, the man whose name has been taken to characterize the period as the Mendelssohnian period.

Born in a family which, although poor, claimed the aristocracy of learning, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was sure to receive in childhood a thorough Hebrew education, that solid grounding which is indispensable for achievement in Judaism. At the age of fourteen, when his teacher David Frankel was called to Berlin as rabbi, Moses followed, there to continue his studies. In Berlin the adolescent student found the very stimulus, cultural and intellectual, which was to him the realization of the dream of his young life. Cherished intellectual friendships rewarded his many years of

struggle—as tutor, book-keeper, merchant. What was it not worth to become intimate with Lessing, the Christian; Lessing, the Humanist, the advocate of tolerance, of freedom and of opportunity for the Jew: Lessing, who wrote “Die Juden,” the comedy of a Jew who saves a Christian nobleman from the attack of robbers, who when brought to the nobleman’s home—and there falls in love with the daughter—reveals his Jewishness and astounds the nobleman that Jews can be kind. Without Mendelssohn’s knowledge, Lessing printed the former’s anonymous “Philosophical Discourses.” A friend, indeed! Having been thus pushed into the sea of literary activity, Mendelssohn found the experience exhilarating. He joined the swim—and he made quite a splash. People began to talk of the young Jew who wrote on esthetics and philosophy, who had mastered the nuances of German style. A marvel! His keenness in the finesse of German literary style emboldened Mendelssohn to criticize the Prussian King, Frederick the Great, for having written a group of poems in French, and not in German. Worthy of mention is Mendelssohn’s book “Phaëdon,” modelled after Plato, in attractively popular style, written as a defense against the rationalism of his generation which mocked at the idea of the immortality of the soul.

It is noteworthy that, despite his deep Hebraic training, Mendelssohn had as yet done nothing specifically Jewish: only a short commentary, in good Hebrew, on one of Maimonides’ lesser works. Not until personally challenged did he put into print his Jewish views. The challenge came from Lavater, a Protestant clergyman of Switzerland. He, having been impressed by Mendelssohn, sent him his German translation of a French book which set out to offer proofs for Christianity; included in the book was an open letter inviting him to disprove the proofs, or—if unable to do so—to accept Christianity. This disturbed Mendelssohn. Disputes, flirting with animosity, were not to his taste. But he could not escape the obligation of a reply. As a precaution, he first solicited the censor’s promise that whatever he wrote in rejoinder would not be suppressed. Then he published his

reply, a calm and dignified letter insisting on unshaken belief in his own religion: he had analyzed Judaism carefully and had found it satisfactory; had it not satisfied him he would have deserted it, seeing that one must suffer persecution to remain a Jew. The challenge excited Mendelssohn to the extent of injuring his health—to Lavater's great regret—but once his health improved he devoted himself to Jewish affairs.

Mendelssohn translated the Pentateuch into German. Nothing revolutionary is there in that. Yet, although he adhered strictly to the traditional interpretation, a number of the older and rather conservative rabbis opposed it. They proclaimed a ban against it. Why? Because they feared that a German translation would lead the Jews astray. Mendelssohn stoutly defended the translation. Originally he had made it for the private benefit of his children. In its wider publication, he hoped that it would provide the Jew with a key which would unlock the doors of the Western European, rapidly growing, modern culture. The Bible, the Jews knew well enough. But they had inadequate knowledge of the German language (the language of the great literature of that day), instead of which they spoke a mongrel German, the despised Yiddish. The original Hebrew of the Bible they already knew: therefore the alert Jews of Germany were in a position to learn the classical German through Mendelssohn's translation which was written in the Hebrew lettering. Ordinarily, a translation serves the purpose of acquainting one with the original tongue, but in this instance the very reverse was the object in view and the result achieved. The Bible served as a text-book to the German language!

"Jerusalem" (1783) is the title of the book for which Mendelssohn is best known in the history of Judaism. It constitutes a classic retort to a church challenge of the religious authority of Judaism. In this philosophical publication, echoes of which reach into the twentieth century, Mendelssohn demands the freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state. "Jerusalem" carries on the thought of Spinoza's "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus" which in turn is



based on Crescas' "Or Adonai"—with the same problem. The state, he argues, regulates social relations, but the relations between God and man should be left to the conscience of man—the voice of God in man—and not to be enforced by a church. This is the philosophy of natural religion.

In line with Spinoza, the argument leads Mendelssohn to the statement that Judaism has no dogmas. There are the fundamentals of religion, the eternal truths which need no revelation because they can be learned through human reason and through nature; and (not in line with Spinoza) there are the temporal truths which are based on the historic evidence of God's revelation to Moses—the specific legislation. Judaism has no dogmas. Whatever seem to be dogmas in Jewish literature cannot be more than the opinions of individuals. One may deny some essentials and still be a good Jew. The words used by Maimonides—"ani ma'amin"—are not indicative of dogma, do not mean "I believe," but rather "I recognize *als richtig und wahr*." Judaism is based on reason. Essentially, the Bible allows freedom of thought. All that is required is proper action, action in obedience to the revealed laws of the Bible. The Bible commands: "*do*," not "*believe*." The spirit of Judaism demands conformity in performance. The whole essence of Judaism is ceremonial law, whose purpose it is to preserve a natural religion that is free from idolatry. The natural ethical law applies to all, but the ceremonial law is limited to Judaism. Ceremonial law is the link combining law with life. At first the written laws were few, and the unwritten laws were for the purpose of creating a closer attachment between the teachers and the people. God Himself created the ceremonial laws; how can a mere mortal change them? We may not fathom the reasons for some of these laws, but where has God indicated that these laws can be changed? Mendelssohn thus endeavored to harmonize his philosophical views with the ceremonial laws of Judaism.

"Jerusalem" makes clear that the original Mosaic government did not represent a union of state and religion, for at that time state and religion were one. Every crime against

the state was a crime against the law of God. Whoever publicly desecrated the Sabbath, acted against the principles of the state. There were no heresies, therefore, but only crimes against the state. Nor was there religious punishment or penance. On the basis of this appeal for the separation of church and state (an appeal which registered strongly with Kant), the argument proceeds with an advocacy for religious toleration. If the Jew were obliged to give up his ceremonial laws as a condition for the granting of Jewish civic rights, then he must forsake political emancipation. But then, of what good to the state are citizens without culture and without character, citizens who relinquish what is their own distinctive contribution? The appeal to Christian Europe not to insist on religious unity did greatly influence some of the leaders. Count Mirabeau, of French Revolution fame, thought the book should be translated so that the rulers might learn tolerance.

If liberals viewed the book with satisfaction it is natural to expect that reactionaries would attack it, especially those conservative theologians who fought for the continued union of church and state. Orthodox Jews, too, attacked the book, their complaint being its theistic philosophy. Liberal Jews of a later day criticized it for its emphasis on ceremonial law. That, however, was acceptable to the Orthodox. But it was in the emphasis on freedom of thought that Jews of liberal tendencies found worth and encouragement. Mendelssohn pleased all, and yet none, for history designated him as the first to grapple with the huge assignment of adjusting Judaism to modernity (or of adjusting modernity to Judaism), an assignment which has not been completed even in the century and a half which have gone by since Mendelssohn's day.

#### 4. VAULTING OVER THE GATES

IN the generation which followed Mendelssohn there was a decided desertion from traditional Judaism, and to an extent Mendelssohn was held responsible. His position must, however, be understood in the light of the times. He had been

importuned, without success, to join Christianity. Therefore he had to stress the importance of the ceremonial law which is the part of the religion that is distinctly Jewish. Also, he had his eye on those who would want to secure professional and social emancipation by embracing Christianity, who were ready to seize the first opportunity to vault over the gates of the ghetto, even if it meant leaping over the rabbinic hedge as well. The fact remains that at heart Mendelssohn was a Jew. And yet his own children were baptized into the Christian faith. The burden of blame must be placed upon the disparity between the great educational and cultural opportunities of that period and the heart-breaking restrictions clamping down the chances of Jewish participation. One must also take into account the spirit of the age, the spirit of rationalism which weakened ceremonialism, that very spirit against which Mendelssohn contended. Mendelssohn protested that a statement acknowledging that one is a Jew, without assuming any further responsibility, was not enough, that what was essential was the observance of certain minimum Jewish practices — the ceremonials.

Whatever influence to the good Mendelssohn exerted made itself felt in two directions. First, through the classic quality of his writings he brought to the Jews the respect of the leaders of European culture. Secondly, he gave to young Jews an incentive to acquire modern knowledge, to remain Jewish and yet forsake the seclusion of the ghetto. This latter influence led to the Berlin Haskalah, whose slogan it was, "Be a Jew at home; but a man in the world." Unfortunately, when carried to extremes the Haskalah movement opened the way for an outbreak of apostasy. To certain of the young Jewish intellectuals who had become fascinated by non-Jewish lore Judaism completely lost all its attractiveness. Why then suffer for it? The youth of the German, Austrian, Polish and Lithuanian Jewries came under that Mendelssohnian influence; but a few generations later, under the influence of nationalism, the same Maskilim (personnel of the Haskalah) turned against Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn had no disciples, in the ordinary sense of the

term. His vocation was not teaching; he was a merchant. Scholarship was rather his hobby. On the Sabbath and Festivals young, intellectual Jews would gather in his home to discuss philosophical and literary subjects. He acted as referee, and by looking up interestedly he would encourage sensible talk, but when nonsense was offered he kept his head down as a visible indication that no favorable impression was being registered.

In the wider sense of discipleship, then, four or five names may be mentioned. David Friedlander (1750-1834) should receive mention. He married into a rich Berlin family and was primarily a business man. To his credit be it said that he took a cultured interest in Judaism, even if it was superficial. To him Mendelssohn was the greatest sage in the world. Mendelssohn's ideas of natural and historical religion he swallowed with one gulp. As one may imagine, it was easier to swallow those ideas than to digest them.

After the death of his inspiration, Mendelssohn, he grew lax in the observance of the ceremonial law. That made him more comfortable. He saw no reason to remain a Jew at the cost of enfranchisement. Having applied for special privileges of citizenship for himself and his family only to be refused, he lost hope for the full emancipation of the Jew. Therefore, as representative of a group of like-minded aspirants, he wrote an open letter to a Protestant clergyman, Teller, offering to accept Christianity. In the letter he characterized his own religion as old-fashioned and full of mysticism, which was illogical for those enlightened days. He made only one condition in his offer, that he become a Christian without having to accept Jesus as the Son of God, without having to attend church and to other requirements of Christianity. Had not Mendelssohn taught freedom in creed? The clergyman Teller, a man of character and conviction, politely refused the offer and politely advised Friedlander and his following to remain Jews; that if Judaism displeased them they should reform it, not desert it; that Christianity does not want converts who do not believe in the Christian creed. Thus rejected, Friedlander remained a Jew

(although his children found acceptance in Christianity), and he always defended, after this, the Jewish cause and devoted a good part of his wealth to the struggle for the educational and civic emancipation of the Jew.

Marcus Herz (1747-1803), the son of a poor Berlin "sofer" (scribe), was another of the newly emancipated Jews. With his sharp mind he studied medicine and philosophy and became one of the first to popularize Kant's philosophy. As a physician in Berlin, rich and witty, he made his home the meeting-place for the illustrious of cultured and scientific Berlin. At his home one would come across Hegel, Schleiermacher. But this mingling of Jews and Christians in those disenfranchised days was liable to induce wholesale apostasy. In the instance of Marcus Herz we know that when death removed him from the family circle his widow (after her mother's demise) fled to Christianity and thus escaped the unbearably oppressive confines of the ghetto. Judaism did not seem to have anything to offer: at best, it was obsolete; at worst, it was a jail, through whose windows one could catch the tantalizing glimpse of the finesse and splendor of the world beyond the ghetto gates.

Another enthusiastic Kantian, in Vienna and then in Berlin, was Lazarus Bendavid (1762-1832). In a book of his he shows which way the wind was blowing, by opposing legalistic Judaism and stressing the ethical side of Judaism.

Solomon Maimon (1754-1800), an intellectual tragedy, a thwarted genius, is another specimen of that abnormal period in the history of Judaism. Poverty in a Lithuanian village robbed him of a systematic training in his youth. Had the Jew been accorded his normal place in the modern world, had the doors of the universities been open to Solomon, there is no telling what heights of intellectual achievement he might have reached. As evidence of his native brilliance it is said that at the age of seven he picked up a Hebrew book on astronomy and mastered it. At the age of eleven he was a married man. His father had thought to capitalize on the son's brilliance with a fortuitous marriage, but Solomon's

amazon of a mother-in-law supported him for only six months instead of the promised six years, and even in those six months many dishes were broken in an exchange of temper. Fortunately, Solomon was a resourceful lad. He could earn his own independent living as teacher of Hebrew. More than all else, this prodigy hungered for knowledge. Hebrew and religion he already knew. It was secular knowledge that he now craved. He could not afford to pay for instruction. But where there is a will there is a way. At the age of sixteen, he found the way. He knew that it was first necessary to comprehend the German language, the language of the scientific and cultural literature. How do that? Not a single letter of the German alphabet could he read—it was all so unlike the Hebrew alphabet and lettering. He remembered, though, that the pages of a printed Hebrew volume were numbered with both the Hebrew and German letters, and by comparing the two he learned the German alphabet. Before long he was deep in German literature!

What did those painstaking secular studies lead to? They turned Solomon Maimon into a skeptic. He lost his belief in God. To continue to teach the Talmud and other Hebrew subjects in which he no longer believed was more than he could endure, so that at the age of twenty-three he deserted his wife and children and smuggled himself into Germany, there to study medicine. In Germany his un-Germanic manners and ridiculed Lithuanian accent militated against him and against the recognition of his capabilities. His poverty did not add to his popularity, nor did his rationalism. While in Berlin, his ability brought him under Mendelssohn's attention, but that did not get him anywhere. After a futile attempt of three years to become a druggist he left for Holland, thence to Hamburg. So he wandered on, making friends and losing them. Even when death ended his wanderings, the community refused him decent burial because of his heresy. Heresy was not his worst offence. The lack of etiquette, that was the tragedy. The Lithuanian ghetto clung to him. The bridge between the medieval and the modern for the Jew was just then being constructed and

this sad figure stood with his feet rooted in the medieval while his head leaned over to the modern.

All in all, Solomon Maimon had written eleven books and twenty-five articles, not counting those manuscripts which were disgracefully destroyed at his funeral. As great an authority as Kant himself had recognized the brilliance of Maimon's criticism of the Kantian philosophy. Maimon was ahead of his day when he taught that God is the ideal of the idea of the most perfect being, the combination of all perfection, an ideal for us to imitate, although we can never reach it; to take any other for imitation is idolatry.

Further in tracing the Mendelssohnian reverberations, it is necessary to call attention to a group of young men, inspired by him, who are identified as the Meassefim, because of the periodical, Ha-Meassef ("the gatherer"), to which these intellectuals contributed Hebrew and German articles. Ha-Meassef magazine was founded and edited by Isaac Euchel of Koenigsberg in 1783. In its subsequent development it made its appearance in Berlin, then in Breslau. Its policy was to combine the old and the new, to take the conservative middle course between the extreme of orthodoxy and the radicalism of the rationalists who were none too reluctant to make the leap to Christianity for ulterior purposes. The Meassefim knew well the Jewish and Talmudic literature but also the modern subjects did they command and so this first Jewish periodical of the modern age proved exceedingly effective in disseminating modern literature and modern thought amongst the elect Jews of the new era. The articles were written in Hebrew: Hebrew was the necessary medium of expression until German would become more widely comprehensible to the Jewish readers. To express modern terms in the Biblical Hebrew was no easy assignment but the Meassefim earnestly applied themselves to the task of accommodating the ancient phrases to the modern requirements. They thus effected a twofold accomplishment. While helping to end the isolation of the self-contained ghetto life, they at the same time revived Hebrew and adapted it as a secular tongue.

The content and method of modern occidental education were invading the precincts of Jewish life, reaching into the traditional religion with drastic penetration. A Berlin Free School for Jews, established by David Friedlander in 1778, provided secular as well as Jewish education and thus differed from the old type of "heder" which had confined itself to Biblical and rabbinic literature. The printing press of the school published important volumes. From 1781 to 1791 more than five hundred students here received the wider scope of instruction. From amongst those graduates came the nucleus of the Berlin Haskalah. With the passing of the years, Jewish subjects were gradually crowded out and only secular subjects remained. Unfortunately, the spirit of Haskalah involved too much negation of the heroic past of the Jews. There was too much scoffing. There was too much haste to surrender to the environment. Jewish history and literature were not sufficiently appreciated. The enthusiasm of intellectual youth was misdirected. The followers of Haskalah and the followers of the orthodox religion drifted apart. That was an inevitable result. Inasmuch as the orthodox were in the control of the communal institutions, the Maskilim organized themselves (in 1792) into a Society of Friends to help one another in time of need. Then, when the iron rule of Frederick the Great was relaxed, many of the Jewish intellectuals slipped away entirely from Judaism.

From the Jewish standpoint conditions were most unsatisfactory. The whole situation was lopsided. Here was a fine grouping of Jews, of keen intelligence, able to read German, gifted for the professions, eager to join in the cultured circles of the day, eager to contribute to the reawakening of European civilization. But how realize these worthy ambitions? As far as Europe was concerned, Jews were not even citizens of the nations in which they lived, in which their forbears of many generations had lived and died. They did not belong. Of what avail the intelligence or education, the talents or desires? They would be permitted to proceed only so far, and not a step further. They were Jews! Should they acknowledge the Christian faith, that would be another mat-



ter. Then could they enjoy full participation in careers and professions. Only then!

It is not altogether surprising, in view of the terrible alternative, that quite a number of those who had suffered the tortures of Tantalus decided upon an escape—through Christianity. To most of them the matter of conversion was a formality, bereft of intrinsic significance. Had their Judaism been their guide in life, the motivating force in their thoughts and deeds, they might have found the act of conversion impossible of consummation—and in certain instances that was the case—but in the main those intellectuals felt that their religion was dispensable, that Judaism as they knew it was out of accord with the times, that it certainly did not justify the personal sacrifice demanded in remaining a Jew. These are the ones who with one leap vaulted over the gates as well as the hedge of the ghetto.

#### 5. OPENING OF THE GHETTO GATES

THE time arrived to open the gates. At long last, the world was ready to grant the Jew emancipation—political, civil, economic, professional, educational, social. It did not come easily.

The United States of America was the first of all the modern nations of the world to grant the Jew equality. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"—those immortal words so dear to lovers of humanity—those words the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 pronounced as a self-evident truth.

The Constitution of the new nation, finally accepted in 1790, discountenanced any religious test as requisite in qualifying for any office. The First Amendment to the Constitution, adopted the following year, made clear in America the separation between church and state, while upholding the right to the free exercise of religion. Only in the State of Maryland was there an exception with regard to the eligibility

to office and this disability was removed in 1825. Other than this one exception,\* emancipation officially came to the Jews of America with the establishment of the United States of America. To the "sweet land of liberty" thousands and hundreds of thousands of Jews migrated, until America had become in the twentieth century the most populous and the most enterprising center of Jewish activity.

In the eighteenth century, however, the Jewish population in the western hemisphere was relatively slight. At that time, the countries of Europe harbored the great majority of the million souls to whom was entrusted the destiny of Judaism. The immediate future of the religion was dependent upon the European setting. There, Jews were still regarded as aliens. In the best of circumstances, they were shown a measure of toleration. A few rights were thrown in, now and then, to enable them to live. In Holland and England they had more rights; in Germany and Austria, fewer. It was always a matter of asking for rights: a matter of toleration, but no equality: a matter of more or less. How could the Jews enjoy equality if the gentiles themselves were not equals? The whole political organization of Europe had to be revolutionized.

In 1781 the young Christian scholar Wilhelm Dohm wrote a German book advocating the civic amelioration of the Jewish position, arguing that there is not a thing to prevent Jews from becoming good citizens, once given the privilege of citizenship. To this literary appeal, presumably, there was some response in Austria. That year, Emperor Joseph the Second issued an Edict of Toleration for the Jews, increasing the scope of their rights. The universities opened to the Jews their carefully guarded doors. But there was a "catch" in the Edict. It seems to have had as its basic purpose the nationalistic policy of Germanizing the state. It ordered that all heder be abolished, in order that Jewish children study none other than the German language. Unfeeling school teachers mocked things Jewish. Jewish leaders soon sus-

\* Although the Constitution of North Carolina enfranchised only Protestants, that restriction was not enforced; in 1868 it was entirely removed.

pected in the Edict of "Toleration" efforts to weaken the religion. Even these feeble beginnings of emancipation came to an end when the successor of Joseph II proved to be a hopeless reactionary.

It was the French Revolution of 1789 that brought to an issue the democratic principle of equality. Yet, even after the Revolution, during the first elections for the National Assembly, there was manifest considerable reluctance in applying the status of equality to the Jewish population. Therefore the Jewish question came up for debate in the new French parliament. Among the liberal leaders who advocated equal rights as a matter of principle, Jews found many friends: in particular, Count Mirabeau who apparently was influenced by Wilhelm Dohm's pleas. In the National Assembly the liberals won the decision that no one be persecuted for his principles, even religious, provided that the expression of those convictions does not contravene the social order established by law. There was a readiness to accept the fine theory but little eagerness to put it into practice, and as for enforcing it—the Assembly was just too busy! For two years nothing happened.

Even so, the official acceptance of the goal as a plausible and worthy one was in itself great encouragement to carry on the fight for equality. The next move was made in the form of a request that the Constitution specifically designate the Jew as included in the equality law, for there were those non-Jews who regarded the Jew as outside the law and requiring special provision. Moreover, Jews themselves felt it necessary to point out that they be classified as adherents of a Jewish religion, and not as a separate nation—by a nation they meant a territorial entity, embracing those who live in a certain district. These earnest efforts were finally rewarded with the decree of September 27th, 1791, granting to the Jews of France full and equal civic rights.

To enjoy the privilege of full citizenship meant relinquishing the local autonomy so long exercised. The exchange was gladly made. While vowing to remain loyal to Judaism, the enfranchised Jews of France jubilantly determined to act

as Frenchmen in all civic and political matters and to participate extensively in the modern culture. Unfortunately, though, the dawn of emancipation coincided with the post-Revolution years of terror and chaos. The Cult of Reason turned the years 1793 and 1794 into a veritable nightmare for organized religion. The synagogue, along with the Catholic institutions, trembled under the force of the attack. The newly-ordained ten-day week militated against Sabbath observance; in the city of Metz a Sefer Torah was wilfully destroyed, denounced as a parchment containing "the laws of the versatile swindler Moses"; most of the Jewish ceremonials were prohibited, with the exception of Passover which was tolerated only because it enshrines the ideal of freedom. There were, indeed, those Jews who could not escape the fanatical iconoclasm of the moment and only too feverishly deserted everything Jewish, as though that were demanded as part of their allegiance to the state.

In rapid succession, the terrorism was overthrown in 1795, the Directorate was succeeded by the Consulate of Napoleon, and that, by the Napoleonic Empire which lasted from 1804 to 1815. Jewish rights were reaffirmed. But much damage had to be repaired. Jewish emancipation, having coincided with the terror and continuous warfare, did not have the necessary breathing spell to adjust itself to the new liberties. This serious disadvantage was largely responsible for the ugly slander that was circulated against the Jew.

The unpleasantness which had arisen, especially the accusation of Jewish usury and foreclosure, led Napoleon Bonaparte to give thought to the Jewish question. It was his idea to quell the disturbance by restricting Jewish rights in some degree, if only temporarily, especially in eastern France. For consultation in this matter he summoned to Paris in 1806 an Assembly of Jewish Notables, mostly laymen, to be chosen by the various prefects. They were to advise him as to whether Jews were capable of adapting themselves to French citizenship, capable of observing the French law and conduct and civil morality.

Napoleon appointed three commissioners to set the ques-

tions and to intimate the sort of reply which the all-powerful Napoleon expected. These commissioners were not particularly friendly to the Jews: unfeelingly, they scheduled the first meeting for a Sabbath. The convention began, as conventions have a habit of beginning, with laudatory oratory—praise for Napoleon and loyalty to France. As a reward, the second session was opened by the Napoleonic commissioner, Count Molé, with insinuations insulting to Jewish conduct. Twelve questions he placed before the conference for reply. To these, they replied that polygamy was not practiced amongst Jews, except in the Orient; that the Jewish law allowed divorce, but that the Jewish law was not valid if it disregarded the civil law; that the Jewish law prohibiting intermarriage referred only to idolators, such as the Canaanites of old, but not to Monotheists—still, a rabbi could not solemnize that marriage between Jew and Christian any more than a Catholic priest would sanction a union in similar circumstances; that the French Jews recognize their fellow-Frenchmen as their brethren, and not strangers; that the conduct of a Jew toward a non-Jew is as scrupulous as that toward his fellow-Jew; that France is their own country; that they would defend their country; that they would be ruled by the laws of France, not by those of their own hitherto autonomous Bet Din; that the rabbi possesses no autonomous power, it being his function to preach and his authority to perform marriages and divorces, but only under the control of the civil court; that the Jewish law does not prohibit certain occupations such as peasantry and warfare; that usury is contrary to Jewish law; and that usury from non-Jews is no less contrary to Jewish law. These replies satisfied Napoleon. Of course they satisfied him. They should have satisfied him. Had he not made it painfully clear that these were the replies he expected?

Now for the stamp of authority: the authority of the whole mass of Jews and the backing of the Talmud was the next objective, in short, to convert these replies into religious doctrines. This Napoleon achieved in true Napoleonic fashion. A great Sanhedrin he summoned, a

supreme Jewish tribunal, modeled after that of ancient Jerusalem. In four languages he issued a stirring appeal for all Jews to participate. In accordance with the tradition of the Sanhedrin, seventy members and a president were appointed. Forty-six were rabbis; twenty-five, laymen. In 1807 the Grand Sanhedrin met, "to sanction the resolutions of the Assembly of Deputies," and this they did. They could not do otherwise. The key decision was declared at the outset that there are two phases of Judaism—the religious and the political or national—and that, whereas the religious laws are constant, those connected with the national life in Palestine no longer functioned when that national autonomy of Palestine ceased; therefore the civil and political law of the land wherein the Jew dwells is binding upon him. This was a distinction of far-reaching consequences. As its implications deepened, it created a division between two interpretations of Judaism, one, wholly and solely religious; the other, religious plus the national, or national minus the religious.

The immediate outcome of the Sanhedrin was far from satisfactory. It was convened under duress and no happy results could be expected, no matter how conciliatory the Jewish leaders tried to be. It resulted in Napoleon's Infamous Decree of 1808 which was calculated to ruin the honest livelihood of numerous Jews, with insult added to the injury. Napoleon, moreover, subdivided the Jews of his realm into Consistories, one for every two thousand Jews, with a Grand Rabbi in each. The purpose was not to facilitate religious equality—a likely assumption—but to prepare the way for the conscription of Jews into the French army.

Not until after Napoleon's star had set did the Jews of France regain their equality. The Constitutional Charter issued by King Louis XVIII in 1814 declared the equality of all citizens and their religious freedom. But, after Napoleon's overthrow, French Jewry ceased to play the prominent rôle in Europe.

As everyone knows, though, the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte brought change and counter-change not alone to

France but also to the surrounding territory which Napoleon invaded. Moreover, even before Napoleon, the clamor of the French Revolution for liberty, fraternity and equality reverberated from one end of Europe to the other, with inevitable results. The statement has been made that when the walls of the Bastille fell the walls of the ghetto fell as well, and the statement is true to the extent that the French Revolution and the succession of encouraging events stimulated Jewish emancipation in the lands adjacent to France. In the quarter of a century that followed, the Jewries of Western Europe emerged from medievalism to modernity.

Holland (which included Belgium until 1830) was the first to follow the example of France. In 1795, when under the impetus of the French quest for liberty the Batavian Republic was founded and the Constitution was drawn up, the question of the Jewish rights presented itself. The Jewish community of Holland, numbering fifty thousand, of whom twenty thousand lived in Amsterdam, was a highly representative community—cultured and prominent. Amongst the leaders the proposed emancipation climaxed a sharp division of opinion. Those who had become imbued with the free spirit of the eighteenth century and the outlook of the Mendelssohn school earnestly desired the boon of full citizenship. They were in the minority. Arrayed against them was the orthodox majority which suspected the certain dangers of French free-thinking and, in addition, opposed the exchange of the solidly organized autonomous rule for the doubtful benefits of emancipation. As a result, few Jews availed themselves of the newly awarded privilege of voting for the new parliament, and not one Jew was elected to it.

Then, in March 1796, a parliamentary committee was assigned to inquire into the petition for Jewish emancipation. It reported favorably. That brought the question to the floor of parliament where it was discussed for eight days, the primary consideration being as to whether the Jews are a nation or a religion, and it was decided on September second, 1796, that no Jew complying with the duties of citizenship be deprived of full rights as Batavian citizens, and that all

previous provincial and municipal enactments prejudicial to Jews be abolished. This decision was received with an amazing lack of joy on the part of the Jews, a reception quite different from that in France. The majority of the Dutch Jews harbored no ambitions to become officials nor to serve in the army; they wanted their own autonomy. Friction resulted between the liberal and orthodox Jews. The former seceded and formed their own community in Amsterdam, and their own synagogue which they called Adath Jeshurun, where they introduced conservative reforms, such as the abolition of superfluous liturgical poetry, the elimination of the prayer against "informers" and like prayers, the introduction of sermons in the Dutch language, the study of the Bible rather than the Talmud as the basis of the child's education, the modification of the orthodox custom of burial within the shortest time possible after death occurs.

The effects of the new, modern environment made themselves felt immediately, with inevitable consequences to the religion. Not since the destruction of the Temple and the exile from the Holy Land was the Judaism of old subjected to so radical a change of environment. In the election of 1797 two Amsterdam Jews were voted into parliament, the first time in history that Jews gained election to a parliament of a European nation; in the following year a third one was elected. The old world itself had become for the Jew a new world.

In the two millennia of the formative period of Judaism, when radical change followed radical change, in historic succession, the religion had proven its vigor in adapting itself to new demands, while yet remaining true to itself — that same vigor began to show itself in the demands of the emancipation era, demands comparable only to those of the early formative centuries of Judaism.

What added gravely to the difficulty of religious adjustment in the modern period was the ragged unevenness with which emancipation came. Emancipation was granted; emancipation was withdrawn. Being a product of the new political liberalism — the new democratic spirit of equal rights



—it partook of the vacillations of political liberalism in the various states of Europe.

In Italy, for example, the coming of Napoleon meant rescue from miserable enslavement to papal curfew laws, fines, censorship, yellow badges; the Republic set up in 1798 struck off those shackles and declared Jewish equality with full citizenship. But the following year the French army moved on to Egypt and the Republic came to an end. Neapolitan troops reconquered Rome and set up a new pope, and while he ruled the Jews with leniency he did not accord them equality. When Rome again came into the hands of the French (1808), emancipation was restored. When Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig (1814), Italy reverted once more to the power of the pope, and once more emancipation was gone. It did not return until 1870 when the papal states came to an end and the united Kingdom of Italy came into being; then emancipation took on a semblance of stability.

In the English Parliament, Jewish emancipation was more of a religious question, like the granting of civic privileges to the Catholics. As early as 1685, King James II officially invited the Jews to "quietly enjoy the free exercise of their religion, whilst they behave themselves dutifully and obediently to his government." Early efforts to win for Jews rights of citizenship proved unpopular; still, a law enacted in 1740 allowed the naturalization of Jews residing in the American colonies of Britain. To the Jews of Canada full enfranchisement came in 1832. And in England proper the only remaining disability was the disqualification from holding office because of the requirement of taking a Christian vow when assuming office. Special arrangements to overcome that obstacle were made in 1835 and 1845, and finally in 1858 the last disqualification was removed.

If the struggle for recognition was less painful in England, it was correspondingly more painful in Central Europe. The penetrating Napoleonic influence from 1789 to 1815 brought to Central Europe, as on the waves of an incoming tide, decrees of equality; the Rule of Absolutism from 1815 to 1848 abolished those liberal decrees. As on a returning tide, the

insistence on human rights on the part of the underprivileged non-Jewish as well as Jewish groups deluged the reactionaries in the revolutions of 1848, and established constitutional governments—Bohemia and Poland repealed religious disabilities in 1848, Switzerland (in those areas where Jews were allowed to reside) in 1862, Austria-Hungary in 1867, the German Empire in 1870—concessions gained piecemeal, frequently more on paper than in practice. From 1881 to 1905 the wave of liberalism receded a second time, giving way to the new spirit of nationalism, in which spirit Bismarck resorted to the political expediency of combating liberalism by striking at the defenseless Jews (thus was modern “anti-Semitism” born, that name given vogue by a publicist in 1879, the opposition to Jewish emancipation transferred to a pseudo-scientific basis of racial inferiority, with an Anti-Semitic League formed in Roumania as early as 1895). From 1905 to the outbreak of the World War, conditions in Germany and in the countries influenced by Germany became more tolerable.

During the horrible four years of the war, all Jews fought and died equally as citizens of the countries in which they lived; in the peace treaties drafted by the associated powers at Paris in 1918 were included clauses, over and above the granting of equal rights of citizenship, which accorded to all minorities, differing from the majority of the population in race, language and religion, the right and freedom to perpetuate these individual possessions through effective institutions. In the new post-war Republics the Jews enjoyed fair opportunities for participation in the national life and for expression in the religious life. Then, in 1933, the Third Reich usurped the place of the German Republic and with one stroke swept away all the privileges and rights which had been won through endless sacrifice, and reinstituted in Nazi Germany all the restrictions of the pre-emancipation era—and what may yet occur in the lands under German influence one hesitates to predict.

Emancipation, then, is still in the making. In Russia, home

of over three million Jews, which is one-fifth of the Jewish population of the entire world, the dawn of freedom did not come at all until 1917. The revolution in Russia wiped away racial restrictions and banished the dread of savage Czar-inspired pogroms. Under the banner of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, complete Jewish equality (other than the special discriminatory attitude to religion in general) was guaranteed, to the extent of including acts of anti-Semitism in the catalogue of grievous crimes. In Poland, the neighboring center of East European Jewry, complete enfranchisement was not realized until 1919. As recent as that is the emancipation of the Jew!

At the earliest, it was only one hundred and forty-five years ago that communities of Jews could take their place in the modern life; other Jewish communities were forcibly confined within the bounds of medievalism until less than two decades ago. That fact must be remembered above all else! For four centuries the world-at-large had been discovering a new life: the Renaissance led to new education, new science, new philosophy; exploration led to new geography, new astronomy; the religious Reformation led to new theology; the Industrial Revolution led to new inventions, new industries, new trades and new occupations. Individual Jews participated in the creation of the new life, but not the communities of Jews — not until the barriers of discriminatory regulations had been broken down. Then, as the waters gush through the broken walls of a dyke, the full force of modernity swept through the blasted barriers of the ghetto.

That adjustment to modernity which the world-at-large was given four centuries to accomplish, the religion of the Jew has had to cope with as a sudden emergency. In Russia and Poland, Judaism has had less than twenty years for that drastic effort. Hence the uncertainties in the contemporary era of transition in Judaism.

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## 6. ADAPTING JUDAISM TO THE MODERN WORLD

WHERE emancipation came first, there Judaism enjoyed its fullest opportunities to discover what the modern world required of the religion.

The very first religious innovations, as has been indicated, were introduced in 1796 in the ritual of the Adath Jeshurun congregation of Amsterdam, consisting mainly in the abolition of obsolete prayers and in the introduction of the vernacular for sermons, and even those moderate changes were not made without agitation that shook the foundations of the community.

Thoroughgoing reforms were evolving in Germany. The Jewish Free School which David Friedlander had founded in Berlin in 1778 was followed in 1791 by the Wilhelmsschule of Breslau. In addition to the religious subjects, these schools taught "writing, reckoning, language, geography and natural science, in order that the rising generation might be educated to useful citizenship in the state." Israel Jacobson established a similar school in Seesen, and duplicate schools arose in some four other German cities. In these schools, reforms were introduced in the religious Service, reforms which would not have been acceptable or even possible in the synagogue itself. Institutions of modern education thus paved the way for religious reforms.

The pupils, having become familiar with these modifications, naturally expected them in the synagogue proper when they reached adulthood. But it was not an easy matter to tamper with the established ritual of the synagogue. The demand for such innovations had to remain unsatisfied until a leader of sufficient prestige and standing, with the necessary influence and power, would make it an issue. Israel Jacobson proved to be that leader. In 1808 the Napoleonic authorities appointed him to the position of President of the Jewish Consistory, and that office carried with it the power (with the approval of the three rabbis and the two laymen who functioned with him) to regulate Jewish matters in the area under its supervision. Already having introduced into his

school at Seesen some German prayers, German hymns and German sermons, Israel Jacobson built a temple, in 1810, and into the temple he brought those school innovations. There are indications that they drew a considerable number of worshippers who found the Service attractive and in accord with the age in which they lived. That was the simple beginning of the Reform movement in Judaism. It emanated from the laity, not from theologians.

This initial effort died suddenly. The downfall of Napoleon ended the Consistory; Jacobson lost his position of power and left for Berlin. But in 1815, under the stimulus of the Prussian emancipatory edict of 1812, the Reform Service was revived privately in Jacobson's home in Berlin and more successfully in the home of Jacob Herz Beer (father of Meyerbeer the composer). The Orthodox leaders objected, and induced the government to order (1817) the private synagogues to close; but Jacob Herz Beer managed to circumvent the decree.

In 1823, when political reaction had set in, all innovations of a religious nature were forbidden. This proscription was directly responsible for many conversions to Christianity amongst those who, having plunged into the life of the modern world, found alien to themselves the rigid, uncompromising, traditional practices of the synagogues.

Despite the Berlin prohibition, preaching in the German vernacular went on in Dessau and spread into southern Germany. It was, however, the temple of Hamburg, which had been erected in 1818, that assumed the position of leadership; it set the pace in adapting Judaism to the environment. The Reform form of worship, as it progressed, favored the more euphonious Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew, a shortening of the ritual and chanting; Reform eliminated the prayers for the return to Zion, the restoration of the Temple and its sacrificial cult, the advent of a personal Messiah — all these as no longer desirable objects of prayer; Reform eliminated the selling of "mizwot" — as obsolete; Reform abolished the observance of the second days of Festivals — as superfluous now that the original reason of calendar uncertainty was gone;

Reform introduced the organ, modern music, modern hymns, reading instead of chanting from the Scroll of the Law, removal of the head-covering in the place of worship, dignity and decorum—these as esthetically desirable and more conducive to stimulating a religious response; Reform introduced the Confirmation Service—as an essential religious experience in the years of adolescence; Reform accorded to woman equality with man in the religious obligations and privileges; Reform adopted for prayer and sermon, as supplementary to the Hebrew, the use of the vernacular—as a vehicle of expression which one may understand. In effecting these reforms, the pioneers of the new development in Judaism did not reach down into the heart of their problem, but their actions show that they did somehow feel that Judaism is a living religion and as such must enter the lives of each generation of Jews; to enable it to do so, it may be necessary to discard what is outgrown, to clothe it with a modern garb, with beauty and dignity.

It was not long before a quarrel arose between the Orthodox and Reform groups. On their side of the argument the Reformers sought to justify reforms on the basis of the Talmud itself. Even when annihilating some Talmudic regulations, they turned to Talmudic authorities in search of justification. That peculiar inconsistency reveals the weakness of the first stage of Reform Judaism. It was entirely external. It had no foundation philosophically. Innovations of external reforms may attract a generation or two, but if they have not the undergirding of a sound foundation that will withstand the assaults of modern thinking they can be but temporary.

The second generation of Reformers recognized this truth. They saw that necessary as were the external reforms, it was even more necessary to conduct research into the basic principles of Judaism. Religious emancipation *had* to come from within, through study and more study. In Berlin there was the Society for the Advancement of the Science of Judaism (“die Wissenschaft des Judenthums”), founded in 1819, which, though dissolved five years later, added tremendously

to the evolution of Judaism by emphasizing as fundamental the necessity for a scientific investigation of the Jewish past.

Even as Moses Mendelssohn through his writings made possible the early beginnings of Jewish participation in the modern world, while he himself remained consistently orthodox in practice, so Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) of "Wissenschaft" fame fathered the second stage of Reform Judaism, without being part of it — being, in fact, opposed to it in his later years. The law of Berlin which forbade synagogue innovations was enacted by the non-Jewish authorities on the assumption that after the birth of Christianity the Jewish religion had lingered on as but a lifeless vestige. It was this blunt assumption that stimulated Leopold Zunz to write "The Homilies of the Jews, Historically Developed" — the first great literary accomplishment of the nineteenth century. With careful scholarship and in a critical spirit he approached holy Scripture as literature, analyzing it as any other historic record would be analyzed, and demonstrated that Judaism is a gradual development, that its Law is a product of evolution, of a continuous tradition — and not the revelation of a single moment, crystallized, complete; that therefore it is false and libelous to assume that the religion stopped living and growing at any particular time. This thesis became central in the research undertaken by the second generation of Reformers.

More than anyone of that generation, Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) dedicated himself to a scientific study of the historic backgrounds of Reform, in order to establish the criteria as to what is and what is not true to Judaism. A university doctorate degree as well as a thoroughgoing Jewish education qualified him for that assignment. In 1836 there appeared the "Nineteen Letters of Ben Uzziel," penned by Samson Raphael Hirsch, which insisted that every detail of the Written and Oral Law is forever valid and that the differentiation in religion between the eternal and the temporary is false. To that scholarly defense of Orthodoxy, Abraham Geiger countered that hedged-in rabbinism is shut off from the light of the modern day, that change is imperative

at a time when the exact observance of every traditional detail has become impossible.

Geiger argued that the Talmudic period — and its summation in the *Shulhan Aruk* — is only a phase in the unfolding of Judaism, not the final development. He admitted the principle of tradition but was opposed to enslavement to individual traditions. He stood for tradition as against traditions. Some of the specific traditions may have possessed values for a former age, but not for the contemporary age: why retain them? All that is essential is to continue in the line of Jewish tradition, to follow the patterns of growth evolved in the past — but to continue to grow!

Rather than have one adhere to established forms and rigid customs, Abraham Geiger stressed the strengthening of the inner moral being. To live in the modern age and to be part of that age, even if it meant ceasing to be a Talmud-obeying Jew, was preferable to that orthodoxy which kept one aloof from the age. Throughout, Geiger sought to explain religion rationally: that inspiration and prophecy are normal experiences of the spirit; that revelation is a gradual disclosure of God and of God's will, without reference to the supernatural; that although some of the Biblical writings are inadequate by reason of the limited knowledge of that age, yet the quintessence of Scripture — the spiritual truth — is still valid; that the Bible, properly interpreted, does not hope for a miraculous redemption or a personal Messiah, but rather for a Messianic age of universal happiness and blessedness. Geiger, in short, attempted to harmonize Law with life. And through research he sought to convince his fellow-Jews that reform in Judaism was an inevitable and necessary phase in the evolution of the religion.

One need hardly add that in defending this attitude Abraham Geiger opened himself to severe attack. His own associates in the rabbinate of the Breslau congregation issued a manifesto against him, whereupon the congregation sought the opinions of leaders as to whether free inquiry for truth in religion was compatible with the rôle of the rabbi. The replies were pro and con, depending upon the degree of



orthodoxy the replies represented. In the end, however, Geiger's stand was confirmed, and when his opposing colleague, Titkin, died, Geiger ascended to the chief rabbinate of the congregation.

A more serious quarrel in 1841 resulted from the revision of the new prayerbook for the Hamburg temple. It proposed to eliminate those traditional portions which prayed for a restoration of the Jewish nation in Palestine. Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860), chief defender of the revision, based himself on the dictum of Jewish tradition—that the law of the state in which the Jew lives is primary. Holdheim maintained that the laws of the state should regulate matters of marriage and divorce, not the Jewish laws. In his "Principles of Reformed Judaism" (1847) he distinguished between the perpetual and the temporary values in the Jewish religion. Moreover, he justified intermarriage, if the non-Jew be of a Monotheistic faith. In this and in other regards he was more radical than Geiger. As rabbi of the Berlin Reform Synagogue, he consented to the transfer of Sabbath Services from Saturday to the Sunday morning; he countenanced the elimination of traditional ceremonies; he contended that the principle of tradition is a "principle of eternal youth, the principle of continuity, constant development and growth of the primitive germs which God Himself placed in Scripture," that the rabbinic interpretation is the product of the point of view of a particular age, but is not the only possible point of view.

The other side of the argument in the matter of the prayerbook revision was upheld by Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793-1865). Resolutely he believed in the national restoration in Palestine and the necessity to pray for it, though he would not relish the reintroduction of the sacrificial ritual of old. It was the more conservative attitude among the early Reformers that Mannheimer expressed. In his ministry in Copenhagen and later in Vienna he adopted moderate innovations, such as Confirmation and the modernization of the Service, yet he was averse to denationalizing Judaism.

Among those who were seeking the appropriate expression of Judaism for the age of emancipation a schism was definitely

developing. The split came in the Frankfurt Conference of 1845, when Zachariah Frankel (1801-1875), Chief Rabbi of Dresden, Geiger's equal in scholarship, withdrew from the conference to express his objections. In taking the path of conservative progressiveness, Frankel followed the lead of Nahman Krochmal (1785-1841) and Solomon Rapoport (1790-1867) and Leopold Zunz. It was Zunz, afore-mentioned founder of the scientific study of Judaism, who emphasized that the consecration of general usage places upon the Jew the obligation of conformity. It is the duty of the individual to change his ways; the religion needs no change. For Leopold Zunz, reformation in Judaism could mean but a fuller self-knowledge, a more adequate knowledge of the continuous process and continuous revelation of the religion and of the beautiful life it demanded.

In the same vein, Zachariah Frankel urged freedom of research and accuracy therein, whilst in the practical life he held supreme the authority of well-established tradition. Search critically and scientifically into the past—he remonstrated—but at the same time reverence as obligatory that which the past has brought into being! He advocated such reform as coupled reason with scholarship; for example, while admitting the permissibility of changes in the ritual, he none the less held on to Hebrew as a necessary part of worship. Like Mannheimer, he felt that the hope for a national restoration in Palestine still had power to stir the imagination and ardor of the Jew. This middle position of his Frankel called “positive historical Judaism.”

To Frankel went the honor of becoming the first head of the new rabbinical seminary which was opened in Breslau in 1854, of having been chosen in preference to Geiger—although the latter had helped considerably in arranging for the necessary endowment. The choice of Frankel meant a victory for the “positive historical” attitude. With him at the helm of that important institution, it was certain to be Conservative and to train a discipleship in modern Judaism which, while progressive, was yet opposed to official Reform.

Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891) was a distinguished member of the faculty of Frankel's rabbinical seminary and he added momentum to the development of Conservative Judaism. His "History of the Jews," written critically yet romantically, achieved wonders in bringing self-knowledge to the rank and file of Jews of his generation and of succeeding generations. Graetz was not opposed to progress in Judaism. In full harmony with the tendencies of his time, he even regretted the fact that the Talmud was codified, for that tended to arrest growth. At the same time, Graetz insisted that no matter what be the origins of the great institutions of Judaism they must be regarded as the best means of discipline, the best bond of union between Jew and Jew.

The conservative check on Reform reveals the relative strength and weakness of the Reform movement at this second generation stage of its emergence. The emancipation contacts had created the urgency for changes in ritual and religious custom; the appreciation of citizenship and the ideal of patriotism had made desirable the emphasis that Jews constitute a religious community, not a separate nation within a nation; the modern ideal of "humanity" had directed attention to the universal outlook of Judaism; the recognition of the scientific method as the key to true knowledge had stimulated a critical study of the literature of Judaism: to the extent that the Reform leaders dedicated heart and mind to meet this four-fold challenge of the modern environment, they are deserving of commendation. The results they achieved went deep beneath the surface. No longer was Reform a haphazard array of expedient reforms in religious practices. It now articulated basic principles, resting on foundations of historic fact: the principle of historic continuity, the principle of differentiating between the temporal and the permanent, the principle of progressive revelation — that God reveals Himself in every age, in the spirit of the age, and that therefore the doctrine as well as the ritual of the religion may be reformulated to conform with the spirit of the present.

What were the weaknesses? The elimination of tradi-

tional observances, one after the other, was slowly transforming the living religion into a scholastic philosophy. By the duties that the worshipper performs, a religion lives. Take away those duties, and nothing remains but vague theology. Had substitute obligations been instituted to take the place of those cancelled, the new spirit would have gained a fresh lease of life in a new body; but only the Confirmation Service was introduced as a major addition. In the old theology, speculation on the mysteries of the realm beyond had yielded great mystical stimulation; that was subdued. Hope for a personal Messiah and for an ultimate restoration to the Holy Land had ever aroused courage and enthusiasm; that was abandoned. The dangers in these negations and cancellations were promptly recognized by the Conservative leaders of the "positive historical" school and they labored mightily to keep the beloved religion from dying of anemia.

Moreover, the masses could not keep pace with the advance of Reform. So sudden the changes, so decisive the departure from the norm of centuries, so complicated the task of adjustment—only the intellectual liberals could maintain the stride. The fiery Breslau Rabbinical Conference of 1846 clearly demonstrated the parting of the ways—the urge of the pace-makers to press on into new ground and the equally determined resolve of the conservatives to proceed with utmost caution. External events spoke the decision. The political persecution and panic of the fourth and fifth decades in Germany brought to a halt the progress of Reform: in the storm of persecution, wisdom dictates caution. That persecution, though, impelled a mighty stream of German Jews to migrate to the land of promise, the United States of America. To the western continent these German immigrants—and their leaders, the pupils of Leopold Stein and Joseph Aub—brought Reform Judaism.

#### 7. SCENE OF ACTION SHIFTS TO AMERICA

THE American scene was favorable for the establishment and spread of Reform. The American atmosphere was charged

with liberal idealism. The American environment was one to encourage freedom of religious practice and freedom of religious inquiry. There were no established congregations to interfere; there were no central ecclesiastical or communal authorities to forbid; there were no political powers to proscribe. Reform and Conservative Judaism arrived in the United States on an equal footing with Orthodox Judaism. There were no precedents to hinder. The same psychology that motivated immigration to the new world predisposed the new arrivals to look for the new, the new life, the new interpretation of the old faith.

As early as 1824 reforms were introduced in the synagogue of Charleston, South Carolina. It was not until 1842 that a congregation — Har Sinai of Baltimore — organized from the outset as a Reform congregation. This was followed in 1845 by Congregation Emanuel of New York City, which has since become the most influential Reform group in America. Rapidly, as the second half of the nineteenth century ran its course, Reform Judaism in America rose to a position of world leadership.

More than any other individual, Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900) brought Reform in America to the forefront. Many a time, the early American leaders threatened to split the movement because of theological differences, and thus perhaps to cripple it forever. Each congregation was a law unto itself, each with its own prayerbook and its own customs. With his organizing genius Isaac Mayer Wise managed to preserve unity, through the strength of organization. In 1873 he founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In 1875 at Cincinnati he opened the Hebrew Union College for the adequate training of Reform rabbis, and became its first president. In 1889 he established the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose most unifying achievement is the Union Prayer Book which in time was adopted by practically every Reform congregation.

To his credit be it said that, though an immigrant to America, it did not take Isaac Mayer Wise long to realize that Reform in this country must not be a mere shadow of Reform

in Germany, but that if it is to be true to the principles of Reform it must seek an adjustment to this new American environment. To his credit be it said, further, that by means of the organizations he created he did much to bring Reform to the laity, and the laity to Reform, and thus to reduce the gap which separated the masses from the theologians. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations – and latterly the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods – opened the way for more action and participation by lay leadership.

The first teachers and disciples of the Hebrew Union College have been designated as the third generation in the history of Reform. They met at conferences to iron out conflicting opinions as to doctrine and practice. The program of that generation was crystallized in the Pittsburgh Conference of 1885, under the guidance of Kaufmann Kohler, foremost theologian of Reform Judaism in America. Because the Pittsburgh "platform," in addition to summarizing the principles reached, pointed to the path Reform was to follow for almost half a century, it is worth quoting in full :

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source, or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended, midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training

the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding this belief on the divine nature of the human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization

of society. (D. Philipson, "The Reform Movement in Judaism," 1931 ed., pp. 355-357).\*

It had been hoped that the Hebrew Union College and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations would serve the needs of the Conservative as well as of the Reform group, but certain of the principles written into the Pittsburgh Conference program proved altogether too radical for the Conservatives. Therefore, in 1886, Sabato Morais of Philadelphia founded the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

This school for the training of Conservative rabbis did not gain its full stride until the arrival in 1902 of Solomon Schechter. Magnificent as a scholar, magnificent as a writer and magnificent as a personality, this Roumanian-born Jew (1850-1915), when called from Cambridge University to head the Jewish Theological Seminary, brought to that institution, and through it to Conservative Judaism in America, a new spirit and a new goal. He advocated liberalism, but a liberalism that was intrinsically Jewish and in strict accordance with the historic continuity of the Jewish people, that would be lived by all Israel—"catholic Israel"—and not by one segment or group. His main quarrel with Reform was that Reform had lost contact with the Jewish group life. After all, Judaism is made up of individual units—the Jews—and the primary caution must ever be to avoid any radical change which might disintegrate the units.

In that stand, Schechter was on the side of Zunz and Frankel. Jastrow of Philadelphia, Kohut and Jacobs of New York, Szold of Baltimore, had shown the same allegiance. The United Synagogue of America (organized in 1913) brought together the congregations supporting the policy of conservative caution in the acceptance of reforms. The Rabbinical Assembly of America gave Conservative Rabbis an opportunity to articulate policies. As against Reform, they fought for the retention of Hebrew in worship. As against Reform, they continued to cherish Palestine and the hope for national restoration; in the words of Schechter, "the

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rebirth of Israel's national consciousness and the revival of Judaism are inseparable." As against Reform, they emphasized the legalism of the Talmud and held tenaciously to every ceremonial possible of fulfillment in the modern world.

The hundreds of thousands of Jews who fled from the torment of Eastern Europe to America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, if they sought worship more modern than that found among the Orthodox, were drawn by the bonds of kinship to Conservative rather than the Reform congregations, without pausing to analyze the subtle distinctions between Conservative and Reform: therefore, to an estimable degree, the cleavage between the two reflected either Eastern European or Germanic points of origin.

It was the hope of Conservative Judaism that whatever adjustment was necessary should be made along strictly traditional lines and given validity by an authoritative body of all Jewry, as in days of old. In the course of events, however, individual Conservative congregations and individual Conservative rabbis made their own individual adjustments. Some introduced the organ; some did not. Some allowed men and women to sit side by side in worship; some did not. Some Conservative congregations could not be distinguished from Orthodox congregations; others seemed almost Reform. Reformers looked upon Conservatism as the stepping-stone to Reform. In countless instances, it is true, the Conservative Jew had but to learn to remove his hat in the synagogue, to accustom himself to the Union Prayer Book, and to enjoy the comradeship of the Jew of German-speaking ancestry, and he promptly felt at home in the ranks of Reform. In other instances, entire Conservative congregations — by the adoption of the Union Prayer Book — voted themselves Reform.

Is the difference between Conservative and Reform only one of degree? Or, has Conservative reached only the first stage of Reform, that of innovations in ritual — moderate innovations, to be sure — without the second stage of theological and doctrinal revaluation of Judaism on the basis of modern knowledge?

## 8. REFORM JUDAISM

CLAUDE G. MONTEFIORE, co-founder in 1901 of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London, and President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (organized in 1926), in all his writings insists that the difference is not one of degree, but a difference of kind. He emphasizes that Reform is the expression of definite principles, is not an unrelated series of convenient or expedient makeshifts. Orthodoxy does not turn into Reform through mere shrinkage. Reform is not obtained by chipping off bits of Orthodoxy. Nor is Reform a shadow of Orthodoxy, comprising those who woefully lament: "Alas, I cannot be Orthodox! I shall do the next best thing." While it is true that Reform and Orthodox have more in common than in difference between them, yet there are fundamental doctrinal distinctions that make Reform not a mere negation. While Conservative or Orthodox lay stress upon action, conduct and unity of observance, without necessitating unity in belief, Reform maintains that action must be based upon faith, that observance must grow out of belief, that the two—the spirit and the performance—must form a unity.

The first principle of Reform, as taught by Montefiore, is precisely that: "In the belief that Orthodox Judaism, as a religious whole, has broken down, and that only fragments, disparate and unharmonized, are left, Liberal Judaism is an attempt to make Judaism a living, working religion, harmonious and consistent in all its parts." ("Some Rough Notes About Liberal Judaism," p. 3.) Doctrinally, Orthodox Judaism has broken down: historic criticism of the Bible and also modern thought have destroyed the theology whose axiom it was that the Law originates from Moses, that it and the codes of Law based on it are unique divine revelation. Partly as a result of modern conditions, Orthodoxy is in chaos. "Thus a new whole has to be constructed—a new harmonious whole of doctrine and form; that is the task of Liberal Judaism . . . this whole, or harmony, consisting of both doctrine and form has to be in the higher sense of the word suitable and

appropriate to the times and the circumstances in and amid which we actually live" (Ibid. p. 5).

According to Montefiore (Ibid. p. 2), the essence of Liberal Judaism is "the passion for, and the cultivation of, truth in the Service of the God of Truth; the desire for Harmony and Unity in the worship of the uniquely One God." All that one does in relation to changes in doctrine and form must be in obedience to this impulse for truth and harmony: that is the final arbiter; that is the authority for the beliefs and practices in Reform Judaism; that is the sanction.

In Orthodox Judaism the authority and sanction is the conviction that the Written Law of Moses and the Oral Law of tradition represent the will of God, as revealed directly by Him, and therefore compel obedience. In Reform Judaism the authority and sanction are conscience and reason. So argues Montefiore ("Liberal Judaism and Authority," pp. 13, 14). "No man can be 'good' who does not of his own mind and conscience accept 'goodness' as the right and ultimate thing to do and to be. 'Goodness' is, indeed, the will of God, but it must be recognized to be this, because it is good, and because God is good, and because He is the condition and guarantee of goodness. Then as to the contents of 'goodness,' we do not make these equivalent to the moral demands of any particular book. The conscience and reason are the final authority, but not an easy, hasty, conceited conscience and reason, but a conscience and a reason which, as they are the product of the past, listen with care and reverence to the gathered wisdom of the ages and to the words of the great teachers, prophets, lawgivers and saints.

"If I did not feel and realize within my own heart and mind that 'goodness' is good, I could not become good, or be good, by doing acts on the authority of a book, or of a code, or even of God. If you attempt to reply, 'Yes, you could, if you believed that God was good,' you give away your case, for if you do good acts because a good God tells you to do them, then goodness is already known to you, and what really happens is that your conscience and reason are reinforced in their commands by the belief that these very commands are

not only their commands, but also God's commands. The Moral Law is both within and without. Its internal authority impels us to believe in the eternal Source of that authority. And this is the very position of Liberal Judaism, which mounts from conscience and reason, from righteousness and love, up to God, and passes down again from God to conscience and reason.

"Then as to religious observance. Here, too, the 'sanction,' the authority, is both internal and external. We test and freely accept the winnowed wisdom of the past. We use with affection and reverence what the past has bequeathed to us, even while we, too, in our turn, select, modify, add. We recognize the divine Spirit, touching the human spirit and illuminating it, in the achievements of the past, and we trust that this divine spirit is still working and still helping in the struggles and achievements of the present."

The doctrines and practices of Liberal or Reform Judaism are in no way dogmatic. They are sufficiently elastic and sufficiently capable of development to include a wide diversity of status and opinion. In the search for truth in doctrine and for forms that correspond harmoniously, Reform must continuously sift and develop, and, so, gradually move forward. This is the progressive revelation of God. Because it is not final does not mean that it is unauthoritative.

Rather is there a challenge to each successive generation to search deeply within itself, to discover new truth, better modes of living, more beautiful practices.

Of the heritage of the past, what does the group conscience and reason of Liberal Judaism accept? Judging by the Resolutions of the Conferences of American Rabbis, the writings of leaders, and the contents of the Union Prayer Book, the Reform group subscribes to the belief: in One God, Creator and Guide of all nature and of all that lives, Source of all truth and righteousness; that God is of the spirit, but can be recognized through His manifestations in nature, in human life, in history; that there is in man a soul, which is non-physical and intangible and accounts for man's love for truth, beauty and goodness, and is thus the point of contact,

without need of mediation, between God and man; that there are laws of moral conduct even as there are laws of nature, and that these moral laws must be obeyed or punishment will come just as disobedience of a natural law brings its inevitable punishment; that the Jew has been chosen for a mission to mankind, by his life and example to bring the nations of the earth to the worship of the One God; that, therefore, the Jew sanctifies God's name through sanctified living, even as he may desecrate God's name through disgraceful living.

Of the heritage of the past, other elements have been modified by Reform on the authority of group acceptance: the traditional hope for a personal Messiah has been transplanted by the projected ideal of a Messianic age of greater happiness, greater justice, greater truth; the traditional belief in resurrection has been limited to a hope for the immortality of the soul. While tradition has always accepted sincere proselytes, Reform has made the road of the proselyte easier by waiving the requirement of immersion in the Mikweh, or of circumcision. Agreeing with tradition that prayer, ceremony and ritual observance are necessary in that they help the effort to commune with God and to sanctify life, Reform has retained the Holidays, but Reform has shortened the prayers, translated them into the vernacular, changed the hours of worship and sometimes even the day of observance.

Reform has entirely eliminated those ceremonial prohibitions whose only defense is the Orthodox argument that they were given by God in His revelation as recorded in the Bible and interpreted in the Talmudic literature but which intrinsically are not necessarily conducive to a more sanctified life—for instance, the prohibition against shaving or the prohibition against wearing garments of flax and wool mixed. The observance of the dietary laws Reform has judged by the same principle, as to whether they contribute to religious value: if they do, observe them by all means; if they do not, one is not sinful in violating them—not convenience or indifference are the deciding factors, but reason and conscience—for to practice that which one cannot accept is to give to

hypocrisy an opening wedge. Similarly, on the question of smoking on the Sabbath, of riding on the Sabbath, of working on the Sabbath, group conscience and reason must be the guide. The acceptance of innovations must satisfy those same requirements: organ music, mixed choirs, the Confirmation Service, and the religious equality of the sexes, have in the Reform group satisfied the requirements of conscience and reason; by that token, future innovations must win the same acceptance.

The standard of group acceptance serves as a powerful bond uniting theory and practice, theologian and layman, reducing the likelihood of the leaders outdistancing their followers—as with the second generation of Reformers in Germany. Religion is not the restricted province of Conferences, nor of theological seminaries, nor of books. Religion must be lived by the people. The leader must lead, but his people must walk with him.

It is possible for a doctrine or practice to gain the acceptance of Reform Jews of one age, and not of the succeeding one. That must be, if divine revelation is progressive. Progress is partly the discovery of new truth, and partly the identification of the old truth as erroneous. The Reform attitude to Jewish nationalism provides an outstanding illustration of this re-evaluative process. So, at least, it seems.

#### 9. SPIRITUAL REBIRTH IN ZIONISM

IN the early days of Reform, when the Jew had just received the invitation to share the life and citizenship of the land in which he lived, there was apprehension lest anything be said or done that might jeopardize the newly won civic rights. They had been won only after it was definitely voted that Jews are a nation no longer, but a religious community. Individual Reform leaders unequivocally took that stand, and the Pittsburgh "platform" of 1885 established it as a guiding principle.

History has wrought many changes since 1885. The prayerful hope for a restoration of Israel to Palestine is an

ancient one, but the formation of a movement and the mobilization of practical efforts to that end did not materialize until the second half of the nineteenth century, coincident with the intensification of the nationalist spirit amongst the peoples of Europe. The harassed Jews recalled that they too had flourished as a proud nation prior to the Roman dispersion, and that the longing for the return to the land of Israel had never died out. Tradition had left to God in His own way and at the appointed time to effect the restoration. But now, seeing other national groups coalesce and through practical politics unify themselves into national units, it dawned upon some of the leaders that the time was propitious for the Jew to bestir himself, to do something practical, to be at least an active "partner of God" in bringing about the national restoration.

Thus, in 1862, Rabbi Zebi Hirsch Kalischer argued in a pamphlet that before the Messiah will come to redeem Israel, Israel must first resettle the Holy Land; as a practical result, an agricultural school was founded near Jaffa eight years afterwards. In a book, "Rome and Jerusalem," a militant journalist, Moses Hess, took up the same cause in 1862: having witnessed the problem of his people in exile, as dramatized in the kidnapping and forced conversion of the Jewish Mortara child and in the Damascus ritual murder libel, he saw in Palestine a solution to the Jewish world problem, and it was he who planted the concept of a Jewish Congress to direct the rehabilitation of Palestine.

More and more, Palestine loomed large as the solution. The much acclaimed political emancipation came short of its promise. The virus of anti-Semitism was beginning to claim its toll in Central and Western Europe, and the monstrous pogroms were making life a living hell in Eastern Europe. The writer Moses Loeb Lilienblum (in 1881) pleaded with his people to reclaim the homeland. In 1882, Leo Pinsker penned the call for "self-emancipation": the world will not emancipate you, then emancipate yourselves, by founding your own independent communal life, no matter where—self-emancipation should be the slogan and the goal. It was

a goal, though, beset by severe hardship. Young pioneers left to settle upon the soil of Palestine, but the rigors of the inhospitable land drove most of them back. Sturdier pioneers came, more devoted pioneers, more willing to sacrifice regardless of time or toil.

One single event, if dramatic enough, may prove a turning point in history. Such an event was the Dreyfus trial. Alfred Dreyfus, Captain in the French Army, was falsely arrested, court-martialed, condemned, degraded and imprisoned for high-treason; the guilty officers, men of high rank, singled out Dreyfus — because a Jew — as a scapegoat; and only after the entire civilized world had become incensed by this outrage on justice was Dreyfus vindicated and freed. Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the Paris correspondent of a Vienna newspaper, was assigned to cover the trial and the resultant degradation. Herzl, himself a Jew, had never shown any particular interest in matters Jewish — not until he witnessed the Dreyfus trial. Then, with the suddenness of a slap in the face, the failure of the political emancipation to end the Jewish question struck him mightily. He could concentrate on nothing else. Impulsively he wrote "The Jewish State" (1895), in which he presented a complete and straightforward scheme whereby a Jewish sovereign state — of the Jews and for the Jews — could be brought into being by the Jews.

Herzl strove to interest the powerful Baron Maurice de Hirsch and other notables, but in vain. However, a leader may require but one disciple to perpetuate his dream-world. That one disciple Herzl found in Max Nordau, the celebrated physician and *littérateur*. At his advice, Herzl discussed the project with Israel Zangwill of London, popular writer on Jewish themes. If the leaders did not respond as readily as Herzl desired, the masses did. The masses who suffered atrocities, the Jews of Russia, Poland, Galicia and Lithuania, they understood and they responded. In August of 1897 two hundred delegates met in Congress in Basle, Switzerland, to define Zionism and to lay the foundation for Zionist endeavor. The definition came in the very first paragraph of the "Programme" adopted: "Zionism aims at establishing for



the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine." To accomplish that end, the Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund were created several years later.

After Herzl's premature death, David Wolffsohn and then Max Nordau led the way. Congresses of Zionists argued, split up, rejoined forces, denounced opponents of Zionism, combated anti-Semitism. So pressing was the need for a haven of refuge that territories other than Palestine were spoken of, but they did not appeal as did the Holy Land. Even if restricted to a slow process of colonization, Palestine, and Palestine only, could evoke the fervor without which the hardships of the pioneer life would never be voluntarily undertaken.

The pen of Ahad Haam (pen-name of Asher Ginzberg) gave lustre to the philosophy of Zionism. In Western Europe, Zionism was tantamount to a political refuge from anti-Semitism; in Eastern Europe, its main attractiveness was its promise of economic opportunities: he sensed the deficiencies in both attitudes. Ahad Haam insisted, and rightly so, that Zionism dare not be negative—a mere escape—but that it must express the positive qualities of the Jew. It must be spiritual. Palestine must become a center for Judaism as well as for the Jew. There, the people must find more than just a living, more than just political rights. There, the soul of the people must be reborn. "The salvation of Israel will come to pass through prophets, and not through diplomats." If Zionism stands for nationalism, it must stand for spiritual nationalism. The Jew must return to the fountainhead for new waters of inspiration. As for the ghetto, while it preserves Judaism, it also dwarfs it; as for emancipation, even were it to succeed, it must necessarily dissipate the traditional ideals of Judaism: hence the need for a return to Palestine—to revive the spirit.

"Spiritual rebirth" became the slogan for the new Palestine. Hebrew revived as a living tongue, as in the days of the Bible. Amongst the colonists who now arrived, there were those who brought with them the cherished ideal of a renas-

cence of Jewish culture. Now the program of Zionism was sufficiently rounded out. Now world Jewry was prepared for the stroke of historic fortune which the forces of destiny were to confer!

During the latter part of the World War, with General Allenby of the British Army preparing his campaign against Turkish control in Palestine, the Zionist leaders in England — Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow — engaged in communication with the British government regarding its proposed policy for Palestine. On November 2, 1917, Lord Arthur J. Balfour, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the British Cabinet, indicated to the Zionist Federation, through Lord Rothschild, that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." When, with the assistance of the Jewish Legion, General Allenby routed the Turkish troupes, Palestine came under the control of Great Britain and to her the Supreme Council of the League of Nations (in 1920) mandated the Holy Land on the terms of the principles outlined in the Balfour Declaration.

Sir Herbert Louis Samuel, distinguished British Jew, was appointed the first High Commissioner of Palestine; Hebrew was declared one of the official languages of the land; and the dream of the centuries, Israel's prayer since the destruction of the Temple, seemed at long last within reach of fulfillment. Zealous pioneers (Halutzim) from all corners of the earth dedicated themselves to the task of reclaiming Palestine, to make it — in fact as in name — the Land of Israel. With their lives they have written a magnificent chapter of heroism.

Those who behold a guiding providence in all history can see in the opening up of Palestine for Jewish immigration a godsend for the disenfranchised Jews of the German Third Reich, and for the starving Jews of Poland. With increasing

tempo, refugees are filling the land, having enlarged the Jewish element in Palestine, in a generation, from a negligible few to almost one-third of the entire population. Zionism is definitely beyond the stage of theory and debate. It is a *fait accompli*. Regardless of the aspirations of the founders of Zionism, regardless of the diversity of programs advocated for the future of Palestine, the ultimate decision is interwoven with the fortunes of Great Britain, with the outcome of the League of Nations, with the future of international history.

Whatever the future will determine, for the present the upbuilding of Palestine is acceptable to all Jewry, if only as a shelter of refuge. Therefore, non-Zionists are willing to work side by side with Zionists to make Palestine more and more available for oppressed brethren.

More than that, Palestine already shows promise of developing into a laboratory for the experimentation and discovery of new social and religious truths, calculated to reward Israel and, through Israel, all mankind. Scarcely a year after the Balfour Declaration, the cornerstone for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was laid on Mount Scopus. All Jewry may look expectantly to the unique contributions that university may make in the name of the Jewish people. Moreover, the majority of the agricultural colonies are organized on the prophetic principles of social justice and righteousness: these daring attempts to translate religious doctrine into practical laws regulating the life of man and the fruits of his labor, may they not yield lessons in human conduct as tremendous as those perpetuated in the Bible? If God's revelation is progressive, will He hide Himself from men and women who deliberately direct their thoughts and deeds to the search for the better life?

That which began as a dream for political rebirth has, by force of circumstances, evolved into a real opportunity for spiritual rebirth. As the nature of Zionism has undergone change, correspondingly the attitude of Reform leadership has shifted. The division between Reform and Conservative on the basis of Palestine is no longer as decisive as it had been. The Jewish Institute of Religion, most of whose graduates

occupy Reform pulpits, stresses the new Palestine. The Central Conference of American Rabbis—official voice of the Reform rabbinate—adopted in the 1935 Conference, by a large majority, the following significant resolution :

Whereas, At certain conventions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, resolutions have been adopted in opposition to Zionism, and

Whereas, We believe that such an attitude no longer reflects the sentiment of a very substantial section of the Conference membership, and

Whereas, We are persuaded that acceptance or rejection of the Zionist program should be left to the determination of the individual members of the Conference themselves, therefore

Be it Resolved, That the Central Conference of American Rabbis takes no official stand on the subject of Zionism ; and be it further

Resolved, That in keeping with its oft-announced intentions, the Central Conference of American Rabbis will continue to co-operate in the upbuilding of Palestine, and in the economic, cultural, and particularly spiritual tasks confronting the growing and evolving Jewish community there. (C. C. A. R. Yearbook, Vol. XLV, p. 103.)

More astounding than the resolve to assist economic cultural and spiritual tasks in Palestine is the resolve to "take no official stand on the subject of Zionism." What a departure from the stand of the 1885 Pittsburgh Conference : "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine . . . nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state"! Although an attitude of official neutrality has been voted, the concept of Jewish nationalism still divides opinion. Dramatically that was demonstrated at the same 1935 Conference, in the Fiftieth Anniversary discussion of the "Pittsburgh platform." "Israel is not a nation in the modern sense of the word," one presentation (of Samuel Schulman, *Ibid.* p. 291) holds ; the other (of Abba Hillel Silver, *Ibid.* p. 339) with equal force reasons, "It is idle, of course, to talk of our people as no longer a nation but a religious community, in the

face of the fact that millions of Jews are today recognized by the law of nations as national minorities in Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, millions more as a distinct nationality in Soviet Russia . . . and hundreds of thousands in Palestine."

Both, however, concur in opposing the attitude of secular nationalists who single out just one element of Judaism, the national, to the exclusion of the religious. But also, both concur in evaluating Judaism as more than just a "church."

Whatever danger there was of Reform reducing Judaism to a mere cult or a mere philosophy of religion is removed by current recognition of the peoplehood of Israel. It accepts the fact that Judaism is a product of the whole Jewish people, that ideals are created socially as well as individually. It makes religion consistently coextensive with life.

To the 1936 Central Conference of American Rabbis a specially appointed committee submitted the following Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism:

In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, and in order to achieve a greater unity of spirit and purpose within the ranks of its followers, the Central Conference of American Rabbis feels called upon to make the following declaration of principles. In the spirit of religious liberalism we present these principles not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of American Jewry.

1. Nature of Judaism. Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people. As an unbroken chain of living tradition, it links all the generations of Israel, giving them aim and direction. While growing out of Jewish experience, the message of Judaism is universal, aiming at the perfection of all mankind under the sovereignty of God.

2. Reform Judaism. The primary object of Reform has been to save the modern Jew for Judaism and Judaism for the modern Jew. It met the challenge of a changing world by recognizing the uninterrupted development of Judaism and by applying the principle of progress consciously to religious as well as to cultural and social life. As a child of the Enlightenment, Reform identified itself with the rationalistic trend in the world of thought. While still prizing the rôle of reason in religion, Reform recog-

nizes the no less creative rôle of emotion in making religion a vital force in the lives of men.

The declaration goes on to define Ethical Monotheism as the heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to the world of religion; man, as created in the image of God, endowed with moral freedom, and an active co-worker with God in the tasks of creation; the soul, as divine and immortal; the Torah, as revealed instruction and law, through nature and the human spirit, continuous and universal, from the covenant at Sinai to the present ("though many of its ancient laws, ceremonial and civil, are no longer operative under the changed conditions of the present, *Law* continues to be an abiding element of the Torah in Judaism"), preserving historical norms, precedents and authority; Israel, as the body of which Judaism is the soul; Palestine, as a Jewish homeland for the oppressed and a center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life; the mission of Israel, as the will to live a life of ethical and religious creativeness. It then defines Jewish Monotheism as ethical—that to love God is to love one's fellowmen, and to apply the prophetic principles of justice and brotherhood to social as well as to personal relationships, to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. Finally, it deals with religious practice: consecration to the ideals of Judaism and joyous participation in the task and problems of the Jewish community and its institutions, with central attention to the synagogue and to prayer, and particularly to the ceremonies ("and a greater use of Hebrew, by the side of the vernacular, in our teaching and worship") to preserve historic consciousness, to hold together a united people, and to enrich lives with sanctity.

Although no definite action was taken at the 1936 Conference, the signs are unmistakable that the present generation is busy reformulating Reform.

## 10. JUDAISM RECONSTRUCTED AS A CIVILIZATION

IN the Conservative interpretation of Judaism, what is the latest development?

The Conservatives never wavered in their acceptance of the peoplehood of Israel. It is that avenue of approach that leads to the most recent reconstruction of Jewish life as a civilization, in which religion is reckoned as but part of the total heritage of the Jew. "Judaism is but one of a number of unique national civilizations guiding humanity toward its spiritual destiny. It has functioned as a civilization through its career, and it is only in that capacity that it can function in the future." That is the conclusion of Mordecai M. Kaplan, professor at the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in his "Judaism as a Civilization" (p. 180).<sup>\*</sup> To be specific, "it includes that nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetic values, which in their totality form a civilization" (p. 178).<sup>\*</sup>

If, then, Judaism is a civilization, it becomes necessary to reshape modern Jewish life so that Judaism may assume its proper proportions as the modern civilization of the Jew. "If Judaism is to survive, the Jews must be permitted to constitute an international people, with Palestine as its homeland. That involves, first, the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish homeland where Jews can constitute a commonwealth; secondly, the insistence upon minority national rights in those countries where the political structure permits it and where the Jews can live as cultural groups; thirdly, the organization of Kehillahs . . . in countries where no minority peoples are recognized" (Mordecai M. Kaplan in *The Menorah Journal*, "Toward a Reconstruction of Judaism," April 1927, p. 124).

"The Kehillah should be an organization of individual Jews who, differ as they may in religious belief and practice, are agreed that Jewish group life in the Diaspora ~~should be con-~~

<sup>\*</sup> By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

tinued and developed. In view of the intellectual and religious diversity of those constituting such a Kehillah, it would be organized on party lines. But all parties would have to agree on the following aims: 1. To make it possible for all Jews, regardless of financial status, to share the benefits of a Beth-Am or Synagogue. 2. To promote a fully developed system of Jewish education comprising kindergartens, week-day afternoon schools, evening courses (both elementary and advanced) for adults, training schools for rabbis, teachers and social workers. 3. To maintain philanthropic institutions. 4. To further the upbuilding of Palestine." (Ibid. pp. 125, 126).

In this plan of reconstructing Judaism as a civilization it would be necessary to reinterpret the ideology, eliminating the thaumaturgic and supernatural; to reorganize the laws to fit into the scheme of organization made possible in the different countries; to revive Hebrew as the living language of the Jew, even outside Palestine; to utilize the creative arts—literature, music, drama, painting, architecture—as Jewish media of expression; and to humanize religion—which must remain the outstanding element in the civilization, as it was in the past.

These proposals have gained wide acclaim and acceptance and have also aroused opposition. Opponents disavow a humanist version of God and, moreover, are apprehensive of a dual civilization which may ghettoize the Jew. However, the presentation of Judaism as a civilization has attracted many devoted disciples, mainly of the Conservative group. It has given to Conservatives a much-desired philosophic basis to what was formerly criticized as but a fragmentary makeshift between Orthodoxy and Reform. The strength and attractiveness of the program for reconstruction as a civilization is its comprehensiveness, its all-inclusiveness, its tangible definiteness.

## II. CHALLENGE OF THE PRESENT

To arrive at a true estimate of the contemporary scene, the recency of Jewish emancipation must be taken into account.



The ghetto is gone, but its shadow projects into the present generation. It is not easy in a few decades, or even in a century, to wipe out the remembrance of two millennia of deprivation. It is too much to expect that so drastic a change of status, such as the enfranchisement of the Jew involves, would become permanent without heart-breaking postponements and frightening reverses. Progress is rarely continuous; it is rarely uninterrupted. Mankind presses forward a few paces, then recedes a step or two; again mankind surges onward, and again gives way to recession, only to resume the forward progress once again—like the waves of an incoming tide, the waves roll forward onto the beach, the undertow with a mighty drag pulls the waters back, new waves gather and push onward, again the undertow, and again the waves, until imperceptibly, inch by inch, the waters have covered the sand. Because there has been a backward pull, the mistake must not be made of viewing the backward move as the permanent one, and the forward surge as merely temporary. History joins religion in proclaiming the mighty truth: ultimately man moves forward!

If Nazism and modern anti-Semitism be but reactionary phases of the struggle for enfranchisement which has never been completely won, if it be that the new emancipation has not had time to mature, would it not be folly—because of a temporary setback—to withdraw into a pre-emancipation type of communal organization, to foster a confined minority life, and to abandon all hope of complete participation in the citizenship and civilization of the nation of one's birth and residence?

The sudden catapult into the modern life has imposed countless tasks. To cope with them, new Jewish institutions have come into being. For almost eighteen hundred years the synagogue had been the focus of Jewish life. **In the** synagogue of each community, Jews had worshipped; **there** they had studied; **there** they had given and received charity; **there** they had voiced the hope for the restoration **to the Holy Land**; **there** they had met to discuss the problems of the day—problems civic, political, economic; **there they had**

planned for the happier future of Jewry. Then the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a sudden splitting away of erstwhile synagogal functions from that central institution of historic Judaism.

Now Jewish Community Centers seek to satisfy the social and physical and educational interests of contemporary Jewry. Zionist organizations and the Jewish Agency concern themselves with the rehabilitation of Palestine. The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the B'nai B'rith Order concentrate on combating anti-Semitism and perpetuating the gains of emancipation. Jewish labor groups turn to their own economic and industrial difficulties. Jewish Welfare Federations and the Joint Distribution Committee look after relief, philanthropy and social welfare. Each sphere of endeavor is important in itself and in the totality of Jewish life; each requires specialization to deal with the complex problems, each calls for and is entitled to the utmost support.

What then remains within the synagogue? Religion—in its narrower sense, namely: worship, sermons, religious education. The synagogue thus finds itself in a weakened condition, for even if it can produce inspiration, the worshipper must, in most instances, look elsewhere for an opportunity to give practical expression to that inspiration.

More serious than the effect on the synagogue, the process of decentralization has secularized much of Jewish activity which had formerly depended on religious motivation, or had served as a means for the expression of religious stimulation. Absorption in these sundry activities has frequently resulted in indifference to the religion itself.

Throughout history, religion was central to the Jew. From the beginning—in the wanderings through the desert, religion—true to the root-meaning of the word—"tied together" the tribes of Israel. In the bondage of Egypt, religion enshrined, as a guiding star, the goal of freedom. In the conquest of Canaan, religion yielded the power for victory. In the Babylonian exile, religion took on new meaning, ex-

tended its horizon, and revealed the knowledge that even in Babylon the Jew could worship God, for One God fills the universe. In the Roman exile, when political independence, homeland and nationality, were annihilated, religion it was that saved the Jew from the fate of other conquered nations — total extermination and oblivion. In the lands of the diaspora, however far-flung, religion radiated a unifying code of conduct and the individual Jew it cloaked with a protective mantle.

Right up to the modern period, what gave the Jew the desire to remain a Jew was the tenacious belief that he was chosen to demonstrate, by the manner of life he lived, the truth of his religion. If, in the modern period, the incentive is gone, if the heart and substance of Judaism is no more, will the miracle of survival continue? Moreover, if the Jew no longer lives his religion, how can he demonstrate its truth?

Indeed, to provide relief for fellow-Jews is essential, to organize facilities for recreation and study is essential, to encourage the settling of pioneers in Palestine is essential, to continue the fight for equality is essential, but to keep alive the religion is quintessential. Religion gives vital meaning to all the other departments of Jewish activity.

The spiritual needs of the individual Jew in his own immediate day-to-day life must not be ignored. He has his own personal problems no less than those which derive from membership in the Jewish group. As a mill cannot be kept going with the water that has already flowed past, so religious nourishment cannot be provided with mere statements of what the Jewish religion has meant to former generations. Regardless of whatever else it may include, Judaism must — among other things — serve the present as a religion. The mistake must not be made of becoming so obsessed with the battle against anti-Semitism, or with raising funds for relief or charity, or with stimulating a renaissance of Jewish culture — all necessary — as to lose sight of the unnumbered thousands who desert Judaism for other religious groups in an honest search for religious comfort and strength. It is hardly adequate to

hurl at these the reminder that Judaism can offer all that any other religion can. The duty of Judaism is to *do* it, not to argue that it *can* do it.

## 12. PROGRAMS FOR THE RELIGION OF THE JEW

ALTHOUGH certain vital activities have been withdrawn from the synagogue, the task of the synagogue is not a whit easier. Its task is infinitely more difficult than ever before. Never before has religion — all organized religion — found itself in so weakened and precarious a condition.

"Acids of modernity" have eaten into the very foundations of religion. Most serious has been the damage done by the downfall of supernatural revelation. As a result of modern thought and the literary and historical criticism of the Bible, an increasing number of intelligent people refuse henceforth to believe that the Bible contains the absolute will of God, directly revealed by Him for all time; therefore, while they may continue to reverence the holy Book, they no longer feel under obligation to obey it. Thus the old inner compelling power of religion is gone, and whatever external force for obedience the synagogue could impose came to an end with the termination of Jewish group autonomy, as the price of political emancipation; in the non-Jewish environment, the separation of church and state has transferred to the state many of the powers formerly exercised by the church. In addition, the comparative study of primitive and contemporary religions tends to prompt one to reconsider the validity of his own religion; at the same time, the modern sciences — psychology particularly — demand a revaluation of all the primary concepts and practices of religion. While these corrosive forces are acting upon the historic religions, the modern world holds out alluring substitute interests: the self-sufficient pleasure seeking of city-life, the inspiration of the modern culture, the absorption in day-to-day problems and causes, the primacy of economic and political problems. Staggering is the moral obligation of the synagogue.

To bring religion to the indifferent and to convey the dis-

tinctive value of Judaism — to accomplish less than that is to fail.

To that end, what are the current programs in Judaism?

First, there is traditional Orthodoxy, with its stronghold in Eastern European and in Oriental countries where emancipation is too recent to have made inroads. Unaffected by the "acids of modernity," this Orthodoxy adheres to the rabbinic interpretation of Biblical Judaism, as crystallized in the *Shulhan Aruk* of the sixteenth century. It is based upon the divine revelation to Moses and his spiritual successors, through the Written and Oral Law. Within Orthodoxy there is still the division between the *Hasidim* and the *Mitnaggedim*, although the former are rapidly diminishing. Within Orthodoxy there is the additional distinction between the *Sephardim*, who live (or whose traceable ancestors lived) in Spain, Portugal, and the northern regions of Africa bordering on the Mediterranean, and the larger group known as the *Ashkenazim*, which includes all the other Jews. The religious distinctions between one group and another consist largely in differences of ritual, of local customs and practices.

The strength of the Orthodox position is the same which preserved Judaism through the centuries. On the basis of the unquestioned supernatural revelation, the Orthodox Jew believes that God is guiding him — whatever happens, that of all the peoples of the earth he is the elect of God, that immortality will be his in the realm beyond, and that ultimate victory and vindication will be his for all his sufferings. Such belief and trust, if sincerely held, makes religion the most important thing in life — worthy of every sacrifice, of the utmost loyalty, of martyrdom even.

The one question which looms large is: how long can this belief last? How soon will the "acids of modernity" seep through, into the isolated towns and villages of the old country? What will be the result of this "acid" test? Consider what has become of Orthodox Judaism in Russia. With revolutionary suddenness and revolutionary ruthlessness the industrial, the philosophical, the scientific and the political forces of this new age have struck at the Jewry of Russia,

which only a generation ago was the stronghold of Orthodoxy, a blow so devastating as to have turned an entire generation of hundreds of thousands of Jews into total atheists and militant iconoclasts. Obviously, the security of Orthodoxy delicately hangs in the balance, contingent upon the political and industrial onslaught which threatens to invade the lands where Orthodoxy still reigns.

In Western Europe, in England, in America, in all places where the Jew has rubbed shoulders with the modern world, his religion has faced the manifold challenge in three ways—the way of the neo-Orthodox, the way of the Conservative, the way of the Reform.

Neo-Orthodoxy is the Orthodoxy that persists even after contact with the new world. It is no longer the same Orthodoxy. It is Orthodoxy on the defensive. It is Orthodoxy—*notwithstanding* modernity! It harks back to the valiant effort of Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) to compel the modern Jew to live up to the requirements of Orthodoxy. It is an attempt at adjustment without sacrificing the traditional religion. The aim of life, it holds, is to obey the will of God, as revealed in the Torah; God's will is eternal—therefore, foremost consideration must be given to the demands of God and not to the demands of the modern world.

In his widely read text on neo-Orthodoxy, "The Jewish Religion," M. Friedlander states at the outset (p. 3) that "abstruse, metaphysical disquisitions about the essence and the attributes of the Divine Being will be avoided in the present work, as also every attempt at proving, philosophically or mathematically, truths which have been revealed to us in a supernatural way . . . and it will be shown that these truths are not contradicted by common sense or by the results of scientific research." Further, he maintains (p. 4) that "there can be no compromise in religion, whether in matters of faith or of practice. Convinced of a certain number of truths, it is impossible for us to abandon any of them without being false to ourselves; being convinced of the binding character of certain religious commands and prohibitions, it would be perverse to pronounce at the same time part of them

as superfluous. Judaism is the adherence to the truths taught in the Holy Law, and the faithful obedience to its precepts."

Neo-Orthodoxy introduces very slight modifications which are not contrary to tradition, recognizes the need for decorum and esthetics, and is on the alert to enrich traditional observance with that supplementation which holy Law allows. It recognizes the wisdom of modern training and organization, as evidenced by the founding of Yeshivah College of America (1896), the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (1898), the Chicago Hebrew Theological College (1921), and by the publication of explanatory literature.

The theological strength of neo-Orthodoxy is its complete reliance on the supernatural revelation, its hope for salvation in the world-to-come, the inner peace which derives from the trust that God rules the destiny of men and nations and that He will provide in the future as He did in the past. Once the premise of the complete supernatural revelation is accepted, neo-Orthodoxy becomes a full, soul-satisfying religion of deed and belief. That premise is the cornerstone. On it everything depends. Unquestionably there are those Jews who can accept it, even as there are Christians (the "fundamentalists") who accept the supernatural revelation of the Bible. The scientific attitude, though, as well as the results of Bible criticism are ever present to confound. There are practical difficulties too. Can the ceremonial requirements be fulfilled in the new industrial era? Can worship thrice daily be punctiliously observed, can the demands of the Sabbath and Holidays be adequately fulfilled, in a setting which joins Jew with non-Jew in economic enterprise? As a simple example of the countless problems to be faced: it is forbidden to ride in an elevator on the Sabbath — consider the limitations imposed on a New York resident in a penthouse. Sacrifice of a heroic order is demanded by neo-Orthodoxy. To be sure, one must be unalterably, unshakably convinced of its theological foundation.

The Conservative group, following the "positive historical" approach of Zachariah Frankel and Solomon Schechter, shift the emphasis from theological distinctions to sociological ones.

Some Conservatives continue to accept the supernatural revelation of Torah completely; some do not. All of the Conservatives, however, regard as primary the people of Israel, viewing Judaism as the religious expression of the Jewish historic group, and maintaining that even if certain religious attitudes and practices are untenable from a theological standpoint they should be adhered to and observed because of their historic group values. For that reason mainly, Conservative Judaism is conservative in its reforms — preferring to retain Hebrew, ceremonials, traditions, whatever be the results of modern research.

Conservative Judaism has been criticized as “timid Reform”; if that be a weakness, it is a weakness which has served a valuable purpose, for this very timidity and reluctance did much to check immoderate Reform, to keep Reform more “Jewish” than it might otherwise have become. Now that a conservative tendency is beginning to show itself in the ranks of Reform, perhaps the Conservatives have done their work so well that before long their reason for a separate existence will cease.

The same is true of the right wing of Conservative Judaism. That has been criticized as “tepid Orthodoxy,” differing from neo-Orthodoxy in that it is less rigid, less exacting, prone to ignore traditional requirements which are almost impossible of fulfillment in modern city-life, responsive to the need for expedient measures to attract youth. These tendencies have served to render neo-Orthodoxy more flexible and more modern. Conservatives of the right wing have done their work so well that perhaps before long they too will have no reason for separate existence.

“Judaism as a Civilization,” with its full program of Zionist endeavor and its completely outlined plan for reconstructing Jewish communal life in the diaspora, is providing for many of the Conservative leaders that distinctive platform which will go toward strengthening the Conservative position.

Reform seeks to reevaluate both the theory and practice, both the theology and observance, of Judaism — to arrive at a



harmony of the two in pursuance of an unhampered search for religious truth, while yet remaining true to the spirit and continuity of Jewish tradition. Accepting the findings of science and of the critical analysis of the Bible and Talmud, Reform does not accept Torah — neither Written nor Oral — as the final truth supernaturally revealed at Sinai, but instead teaches that God reveals Himself progressively in the life of man, of mankind, of nations, of nature. As the Bible and Talmud were originally expressive of a selective process, so may each generation select and choose, discarding that in ceremonial or in ethical teaching or in theology which is outgrown, carefully retaining that which experience and history have proven valuable, and introducing new elements which may deepen religious feeling and conduct. The history of Reform has taught caution with regard to discarding the old and introducing the new, lest the connecting link with the Jewish past be broken, lest the living religion etherealize into mere philosophy.

Where freedom of inquiry is encouraged, a variety of trends are prone to develop. In Reform, there is that group which places foremost the practical interpretation of Judaism in terms of social justice, as applied to modern social ills; there is that group which places foremost the theological adjustment of Judaism with the upheavals of science, the new astronomy, the new chemistry, the new physics, the new psychology, the new philosophy; there is that group which places foremost the peoplehood of Israel, the necessity for more extensive Jewish education, the revival of ceremonials and of ignored traditions; there is that group which places foremost the upbuilding of Palestine; there is that group which places foremost the "mission" principle that the Jew has an appointed responsibility of bringing true religion to the nations of the earth and thus to universalize the values of Judaism. Each trend is a facet of Reform, through which new light enters, adding new blends of coloring to the daring task of enabling Judaism to live on, even when assimilating all that modernity offers.

## 13. WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

WHAT will be the outcome of Orthodoxy, neo-Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform? When the "acids of modernity" will eat more deeply into the historic foundations of Judaism — as they will, if the process of emancipation resumes its pace — will the religion succeed in building new foundations, sturdy foundations, foundations that will present anything like the solidity which Rabbinic Judaism had cemented?

When the Sinaitic supernatural revelation of the Torah crumples, the religion must begin once more with fundamentals. Old questions call for new answers. Is there a God? Is there a God with whom man may enter into relationship? How does God reveal His will to man? What is God's will? Why should man obey it? What is the relation between organized religion and God? Why should Judaism continue separate, a minority religion? For how long? Why should the Jew remain a Jew?

The answers that Judaism will proffer must be dynamic, unequivocal, rooted in the facts of the universe. It will not be sufficiently affirmative to conclude that there is no conflict between science and religion, that God *may* have existence. Half-hearted faith is almost as bad as no faith. Lukewarm faith makes little difference in conditioning an individual's thoughts or deeds. To admit the existence of God, and not to dwell upon the profound, never-ending implications of that admission, is of little consequence. Ardent, positive faith makes all the difference in the world. To say "God is"—and to mean it deeply—is to deny that life is chaotic, to deny that man is a clod of coarse materialism, to deny that righteousness and justice are but products of a mode of reasoning which may have its day only to yield finally to brute force. To accept a living, throbbing God is to fill life with all-encompassing purpose and with all-powerful control.

Religion is not concerned simply with values, but with values grounded in the world order. That is the significant summary of A. N. Whitehead ("Religion in the Making") and it indicates the size of the task in the reconstruction of the

Jewish religion. Only such a reconstruction can engender ardent faith.

No faith could have been more ardent than that of the Israelites in the formative period of Judaism. How did they acquire it? How did they come to know God? What led them to dedicate their lives to Him? When the ancient tribes of Israel caught occasional glimpses of divinity, it was often in some dramatic event which they shared with nature. The chain of phenomena which led to the Exodus from Egypt and to the conquest of Canaan proved providential. If not for the saving events, the Israelites would not have survived. The forces of nature and the fate of nations combined to reveal purpose in the world order, to reveal God's purpose. There were those who had the genius, the insight, who were attuned, to understand and interpret what was revealed. Thus the religion of Israel began; thus it grew; thus it underwent correction and expansion.

Learning from the past, Judaism of the future must again sink its roots in the world order. It must again study nature. It must study more closely the "accidents" of nature, and of history too, "accidents" which have so vitally determined the course of human history and destiny. If these reveal the purpose of God, is the revelation less binding than the revelation of one moment on a Mount Sinai? What, after all, is the definition of "supernatural" revelation? True, progressive revelation is not complete at any one stage, and, moreover, may be erroneously sensed or interpreted. But it is grounded in the world order!

The problem of evil and suffering continues to perplex those who would believe in a good God. The religion of the future must increasingly take nature into account. So much "undeserved" suffering is caused by nature. It is possible that the concept "sin" must be enlarged to include "ignorance." Through ignorance or neglect of nature's inviolable laws, afflictions plague mankind. Increased knowledge will bring increased control. With closer attention to man's relation to nature, it would be well for Judaism to inquire again into the healing power of religion, also to in-

quire again as to whether (on the basis of modern science) the body is not immortal as is the soul. Moreover, which of the moral laws derive from the laws of nature? There is the natural law of consequences—of cause and effect—with widespread moral implications. Are there others?

If nature and history reveal purpose, the Jew may base on good grounds the claim of having been chosen for a mission. His remarkable perseverance and his no less remarkable career, when viewed as interwoven in the fabric of the world order, is sufficiently impressive to arouse in the Jew a passion for self-rededication to God. The world-wide crisis in historic religions which has materialized in the twentieth century may offer the Jew the long-awaited opportunity to show the world-at-large his spiritual wares. Certainly never before has the world so forcibly felt the need for justice for society and for sanctification for the individual. Perhaps the time has come to convey to all mankind the spiritual truths which the history of the Jewish people has revealed, not with the purpose of compelling conversion, but with the avowed purpose of allowing the intrinsic truth and value of the religious experience to create a new heart and a new soul.

For the Jew there must be a deepening of the mystic and moral as well as the intellectual approach to God. Prayer must be made more spontaneous, more soul-searching. On the new basis of reconstruction, for old obligations which have been discarded, new ones must be evolved; as the prophets translated their conception of God and the universe into requirements of the Law, so the new understanding must be translated into tangible requirements. The synagogue must be brought within reach of all Jews, the poor, the rich, the professionals, the educated, the uneducated. It must never tire in contrasting the God-filled life with the godless life. It must clearly enunciate wherein Judaism is to be distinguished from other religions, and, no less, what Judaism holds in common with them.

If Reform and the left wing of Conservatives have gained only a moderate measure of success in meeting the challenge of modernity, it is because the adjustment calls for so much.

In the past Judaism met every crisis, and emerged the stronger. In the modern setting the combination of obstacles is of unprecedented proportions. Therefore the two fundamentals of the religion must receive the major attention. First, God must be made part of life; secondly, the revelation of His purpose must be sought in the world order. If Judaism can take unto itself all that is valuable in the modern world and then relate it to those two fundamentals, then will Judaism meet the crisis and advance that much nearer to the goal of truth. That is how religion grows!

In the meantime, the average Jew who concerns himself with his Jewishness, aware of the contradictory lanes of thought, is frequently dismayed, and the average non-Jew is somewhat puzzled.

"What of the Jewish future?" the Jew asks. "Are we to continue to dissipate our energies, wrangling, competing, belittling? Certainly, if ever a generation needed unity, it is this one." It would be well, therefore, to recall the two phases in the evolution of Judaism. True, there were the many centuries when the Talmud held sway and when unity of observance and belief prevailed. But it is equally true that there was a time, before this, of flux and change, a period of rapid growth, of transition and seeking, and it was during that period that the most astounding truths of Judaism dawned on the Jew. Unity? There was no unity then. Many highways led to the knowledge of God. There was the way of the mystic Psalmist. There was the way of the practical prophet, absorbed in the social and political problems of his day. There was the way of the priest, with his awe-inspiring paraphernalia. There was the way of the doubting philosopher, of Job, of Ecclesiastes. Over these many highways they each sought the direction to God. Out of the conflicts, the overlappings, the recessions and the advances, Judaism grew to maturity.

Transition is, then, a sign of life. Definitely Judaism is moving into an era of vigorous creation. The variety of programs for the future is token of that vigor. If honest difference of opinion be the cause of factions, it would be

folly to desire a dishonest unity. All honest programs are needed. "Elu we-Elu Dibre Elohim Hayim" (Talmud: Erubin 10 b) — the living God speaks through them all. Who can say which will show the way out of the crisis? Time alone can tell. Each group should conscientiously follow its own course. The turn of events, the pressure of the environment, the genius of the people, will determine the manner in which the religion will grow. The unity that arches over all the factions is the unity of continued growth. That is supreme.

One thing is essential. That is a loyalty to the people of Israel. As long as the people of Israel remains, there will be a religion of Israel. Ever must there be the people. Even in atheistic Russia, as long as the people retain its individual identity, there is hope: atheism will die and a new Judaism will arise. Therefore, whatever be the platform or the philosophy that will inspire the Jew to remain a Jew, that program or philosophy is lending its strength to the perpetuation of the Jewish religion. In the century from 1830 to 1930, it is estimated, the Jewish population of the world has increased five-fold. If Judaism has weakened, the Jewish people at least has strengthened. The continuance of a Jewish people guarantees a future for Judaism.

There have been those who have bemoaned their fate to be born Jewish, because of the sacrifices which are demanded of a minority group. But also there have been those who have embraced their destiny to be born within a group whom providence has chosen for a definite, though not thoroughly revealed, purpose. He who is truly convinced by the amazing story of Judaism that the Jews are a people of destiny gladly takes his place in the workings of destiny.

Thus a religion grows: thus it is born . . . thus it lives on . . . thus it faces the future . . . the religion of the Jew.

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## INDEX

- Aaron, 18, 62, 82  
 Abaye, Babylonian Amora, 167  
*Ab Bet Din*, 146  
 Ab, Ninth of, 133, 141, 209, 244  
 Abot, *see* Pirke Abot  
 Abraham, Patriarch, 6, 8 f., 11, 65, 171, 221  
 Abraham ben David, of Posquières, 216  
 Abrahams, Israel, quoted, 255  
 Abtalion, one of "The Pairs," 114  
 Abu Hanifa, Mohammedan casuist, 181, 183  
 Abu Isa, founder of sect, 180 f., 183  
 Abulafia, Abraham, Messianic pretender, 222 f.  
 Adam and Eve, Book of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
 Adath Jeshurun, Amsterdam liberal synagogue, 288, 292  
 Adrianople, 243  
*Aelia Capitolina*, 141  
 Africa, North, Jews in, 325  
 After-life, origin of hope for, 56, 90, 255 ff.; as reward and punishment, 74, 83, 90, 255 ff., 260; legends of, 157 f., 224; in apocryphal literature, 93  
 Agrippa I, Judean ruler, 133  
 Ahab, King of Israel, 31 f.  
 Ahad Haam, Zionist leader, 313  
 Ahikar, Story of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
*Abriman*, 55  
 Ai, Palestine, 22  
 Akiba ben Joseph, Tanna, 139-43, 147, 149, 153  
 Albania, 244  
 Albo, Joseph, 228  
 Alcimus, Hellenist high priest, 90, 105  
 Alexander the Great, 75 f.  
 Alexander Jannaeus, Judean king, 109 f.  
 Alexandra, Queen, 110, 112  
 Alexandria, Egypt, Jews in, 76 ff., 84, 128 f., 134, 154 f., 220  
 Al-Fasi, Isaac, codifier of Talmud and rabbinic law, 204 f., 225, 238  
 Allenby, British General, 313  
 American Jewish Committee, 322  
 American Jewish Congress, 322  
*Am ha-Arez*, 11, 259  
 Amoraim, contributors to the Talmud, 156 ff., 169  
 Amos, prophecy of, 33-9  
 Amram, Sura Gaon, 195  
 Amsterdam, Jews in, 232 ff., 287 f., 292  
 Anan ben David, founder of Ananite sect, 181-6, 189  
 Anathoth, 44  
 Ancestor-worship, 8  
 Angels, in the Bible, 55, 89; origin of names of, 159; mention of names of, by Essenes, 120; in legend, 157; compared to Islamic conception of, 174; agents of God, in creation, 143, 184 f., 221; revelation through, 245, 249; allegorical interpretation of, 212, 217, 252  
 Animatism, 5  
 Animism, 5 ff.  
 Antigonos, Hasmonean, 113 f.  
 Antioch, Syria, 76, 85  
 Antiochus Epiphanes, of Syria, 85 f., 89 f., 105, 155  
 Antipas, Herod's son, 118  
 Antipater, Herod's father, 112 f.  
 Anti-Semitism, 290, 313, 321 ff.  
 Antoninus Pius, 144  
 Antony, Roman ruler, 113 f.  
 Apocalypse, 55 f., 89, 94 f., 220  
 Apocrypha, 93 ff., 129

- Aquila, convert to Judaism, 145  
 Arabia, Jews in, 170 ff.  
 Arabs, before Mohammed, 109, 171;  
   after Mohammed, 168, 175 ff.; in  
   Spain, 195  
 Aragon, Jews in, 218  
 Arameans, 35  
 Archaeology, in clarifying the Bible,  
   8, 11, 22  
 Archelaus, Herod's son, 118  
 Aristeeas, Letter of, in Pseudepigrapha,  
   49, 129  
 Aristobulus, son of Alexander Jan-  
   naeus, 112 f.  
 Aristobulus, son of Hyrcanus, 109  
 Aristotelian philosophy, 210 ff., 217,  
   222, 227, 248  
 Ark, 18, 29, 138  
*Aruk*, Talmud dictionary, 205  
 Asa, King of Judah, 31  
 Asceticism, 120 f., 127 f., 130, 132,  
   183 f., 204  
 Asher ben Jehiel, codifier of Tal-  
   mud and rabbinic law, 225 f., 238  
*Asherah*, 25, 27  
 Ashi, Babylonian Amora, 167  
 Ashkenazim, 195, 226, 238 f., 325  
 Assembly of Jewish Notables, in  
   Paris, 284 ff.  
 Assyria, 34 f., 39 f., 44; religion of,  
   41  
 Astarte, deity, 25  
 Atonement, Day of, origin in  
   Priestly Code, 63; during Second  
   Temple, 78; fasting on, 116; dese-  
   cration by Elisha ben Abuyah,  
   143; adopted by Mohammed, 172;  
   Anan would transfer New Year's  
   Day to, 186; dogmatized, 228; for-  
   giving power, 260  
 Aub, Joseph, Reform leader, 300  
 Augustus, Roman ruler, 155  
 Austria, Jews in, 282 f.  
 Austria-Hungary, emancipation in,  
   290  
 Authority, Bible accepted as, 117,  
   130 f., 191, 250 ff., 307 f.; within  
   the Bible, 97; through decrees of  
   Great Synagogue, 104; disputed  
   by Sadducees, 111; Jesus quotes  
   himself as, 123, 127; of Bet Din,  
   136 f.; of personal prestige of Ju-  
   dah the Patriarch, 150; of the  
   Mishnah, 152, 168; Talmud ac-  
   cepted as, 170, 179, 194; Talmud,  
   challenged by Karaism, 182, 185;  
   Geonim accepted as, 177, 179, 194;  
   Rabbinic Codes accepted as, 205;  
   in Orthodox Judaism, 307 f.; in  
   Conservative Judaism, 305; in Re-  
   form Judaism, 306 ff., 318  
 Averroës, Arab philosopher, 217  
 Avicebron, identified as Ibn Gabi-  
   rol, 204  
 Avicenna, Arab philosopher, 211  
 Avidius Cassius, friend of Judah the  
   Patriarch, 150  
 Azariah, Prayer of, in Apocrypha,  
   93  
 Azriel, mystic, 222  
 Baal-worship, 7, 24 ff., 29 ff., 38, 77  
 Baalath, deity, 25  
 Babylonia, (Babylon), 44, 46, 52, 64,  
   72; Jews in, 47 f., 53, 57, 62, 78,  
   103, 115, 138, 155 f., 170, 175, 221,  
   322 f.; rabbinic schools in, 160, 164-  
   70, 179, 189 f., 193 ff., 197  
 Bagdad, 187, 190, 194  
 Balaam, 141  
 Balfour Declaration, on Palestine,  
   314 f.  
 Baltimore, Maryland, 301, 304  
*Bamoth*, 25, 27  
*Baraita*, extraneous rabbinic tradition,  
   157  
 Barcelona, Spain, 219, 222  
 Bar Kokeba, in revolt against Had-  
   rian, 141 f.  
*Bar Mizwah*, 185  
 Baruch, Book of, I, in Apocrypha,  
   93; II, III, in Pseudepigrapha,  
   94  
 Basle, Zionist declaration in, 312  
 Basnage, Jacob Christian, 270  
 Bath-sheba, David's wife, 29  
 Beer, Jacob Herz, Reform leader,  
   293  
 Beer-sheba, Palestine, 6  
 Bel, deity, 48, 52  
 Bel and the Dragon, in Apocrypha,  
   94



- Belgium, Jewish emancipation in, 287
- Belshazzar, 88
- Ben Azai, Tanna, 143
- Bendavid, Lazarus, 277
- Ben Sira, Joshua, in Apocrypha, 81 ff., 93, 106, 137, 220, 250
- Ben Zoma, Tanna, 143
- Berbers, 195, 202
- Berlin, Jews in, 270, 275 ff., 293 ff.
- Berlin Free School, 280, 292
- Berlin Reform congregation, 297
- Beruriah, Meir's wife, 149
- Besht, founder of modern Hasidism, 263-8
- Bet Din*, 135 f., 141, 152, 285
- Bet ha-Medrash*, 84
- Bet ha-Sefer*, 110
- Bethel, Palestine, 7, 24, 30, 35 n.
- Bible (Old Testament), origins of, 31, 35 n., 58-75; historical criticism of, 9 ff., 61 ff., 123, 185 f., 209 f., 236, 306, 324, 329; traditional accounts, 9 ff.; historical reliability, 11, 22; standardization of text, 153, 179; religion of, 95-102; Animism in, 6 f.; Ancestor-worship in, 8; Polytheism in, 8; Totemism in, 7 f.; reformations in, 31, 41 ff., 58 ff.; pessimism in, 79 ff.; optimism in, 100; authority in, 97, 249 ff., 262, 302, 307 f.; commentaries on, 130, 191, 200 ff., 209, 211, 223, 245; translation, Greek, *see* Septuagint; translation, Latin, *see* Vulgate; translation, Aramaic, *see* Targum Onkelos; translation, Arabic, 191 f.; translation, German, 230, 272
- B'nai B'rith, Jewish Order of, 322
- Boaz, Ruth's husband, 59
- Bohemia, Jewish emancipation in, 290
- Breslau, Jews in, 279, 292, 296
- Breslau Rabbinical Conference (1846), 300
- Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, 298 f.
- Buddenwieser, M., 73 n.
- Cabala, 226, 233 f., 239 ff., 263, 268; origin of, 220 ff.
- Caesar, Julius, Roman ruler, 113, 155
- Caesarea, 118
- Caesarea Philippi, 124
- Cairo, Egypt, 239, 242
- Caleb, 7
- Calendar, 12, 136, 160, 182, 185, 189, 293; fixed by Bet Din, 136
- Caligula, Roman ruler, 128, 133
- Caliph, 181, 187, 195, 197, 202
- Canaan, 19, 22-8, 31, 322; religion of, 24 ff.
- Canada, Jewish emancipation in, 289
- Carmel, Mount, 7
- Caro, Joseph, codifier of Talmud and rabbinic law, 237 ff.
- Catholic Church, 94, 245, 285, 289
- Central Conference of American Rabbis, 301, 308, 316 f.
- Ceremonials, *see* Ritual
- Champagne, France, 200
- Charleston, S. C., Reform synagogue, 301
- Chazars, Jewish kingdom of, 206
- Chicago Hebrew Theological College, 327
- Chosen People, 9, 15, 40, 49 ff., 101, 138, 255, 309, 325
- Christ, 122, 124, 126; *see* Jesus of Nazareth
- Christian Hebraists, 269 f.
- Christianity, 40, 174, 182, 248, 303; Jewish origins of, 49, 95, 118-28, 132, 154, 204, 207; separation from Judaism, 126 f., 142 f., 144 f.; prohibited by Rome, 159; opposition to Judaism by, 160, 217 ff., 230; converts to, 142, 199, 218 f., 246, 275 ff., 281, 293
- Chronicles, Book of, 66
- Church and State, relation of, 38 f., 111, 124, 134, 136, 236, 272 ff., 281, 285 f., 297, 324
- Cincinnati, Ohio, 301
- Circumcision, 13, 48, 63, 141 f., 144 f., 183, 244, 260, 309
- Codes, in formation of the Hexateuch, 10 f., 31, 60 ff.
- Codes of Talmud and rabbinic law, 179 f.; by Saadia, 192; by Hai Gaon, 194; by al-Fasi, 205, 238; by Maimonides, 215 ff., 238; by

- Asher ben Jehiel, 225 f., 238; by Jacob ben Asher, 226, 237, 239; by Joseph Caro, 237 ff.; by Moses Isserles, 238 f.  
*Cohen*, 26  
 Commandment, Second, 7 f.  
 Commandments, Ten, 17 f., 20  
 Comparative religions, 324  
 Compassion, 37 f.  
 Conservative Judaism, 136, 301, 304 f., 315, 319 f., 326 ff., 330, 332; origins of, 297 ff.  
 Constantine, Roman ruler, 160  
 Constantinople, 230, 241 ff.  
 Constantius II, Roman ruler, 160  
 Convictions, strength of, 45 f.  
 Copenhagen, 297  
 Cordova, Spain, 195, 202  
 Council of Trent, Catholic, 94  
*Creatio ex nihilo*, 64, 190, 211, 229  
 Creation, Bible account of, 64 f.; philosophic views of, 131, 203 f., 210 ff., 227 f.; mystical views of, 221, 224, 240  
 Crete, 234  
 Crusades, Christian, 202, 230  
 Cult of Reason, in France, 284  
 Custom, force of, 253  
*Cuzari*, 206 ff.  
 Cyrus, King of Persia, 52 f.  
 Czechoslovakia, Jews in, 317  
  
 Damascus ritual murder libel, 311  
 Dan, tribe of, 30  
 Daniel, Additions to, in Apocrypha, 94  
 Daniel, Book of, 88 f., 91, 224  
 Daniel ben Moses al-Kumisi, Karaite, 185 f.  
 Darius, the Mede, 88 f.  
 David, King, 6, 29 f., 59, 67, 156  
 Deborah, prophetess, 7, 27 f.  
 Demeter, deity, 77  
 Dembowski, bishop in Poland, 246  
 Democritus, Greek philosopher, 188  
 Demons, 26; *see* Satan  
 Descartes, French philosopher, 234  
 Dessau, Jews in, 293  
 Destiny, 20, 35, 331, 334  
 Deuteronomy, Book of, 11, 42 f., 61, 153  
 Diaspora, 136, 154, 250, 323  
 Dietary laws, possible origin, 7; increased importance after destruction of Temple, 48; stressed by Priestly Code, 63; strictly observed by ancient Hasidim, 86, 88; essential observance in Rabbinic Judaism, 260; disparaged by Jesus, 127; ridiculed by Romans, 155; Karaite extremity in strictness, 180, 183, 185; opposed by Judah Leon Modena, 233; attitude of Reform, 309  
 Diocletian, Roman ruler, 159  
 Dionysus, deity, 77  
 Dob Baer of Mezeritz, modern Hasid, 267  
 Dogma, 214 f., 232, 308, 317; Crescas' arrangement, 228 f.; Albo's arrangement, 229; Mendelssohn's attitude to, 273 f., 276  
 Dohm, Christian Wilhelm, 282 f.  
 Donmeh, Jewish Mohammedan sect, 243 f.  
 Dresden, Jews in, 298  
 Dreyfus, Alfred, Affair, 312  
 Dunash ibn Labrat, 196 f., 199  
  
*Eben-ezer*, 7  
 Ecclesiastes (Kohleth), 79 ff., 92, 163, 333  
 Ecclesiasticus, *see* Ben Sira  
 Edict of Toleration, in Austria, 282 f.  
 Egypt, 40, 45 f., 53, 72; Jews in ancient, 9, 13 ff., 331; under the Ptolemies, 76 ff., 84, 86  
 Eibeschutz, Jonathan, 245  
 Eleazar ben Azariah, Tanna, 137  
 Eleazar ben Jose, Tanna, 148  
 Elijah, prophet, 7, 32 f., 57, 122, 124, 157  
 Elijah, called Gaon of Wilna, 267 f.  
*Elim*, 24  
 Elisha, prophet, 33  
 Elisha ben Abuyah, heretic, 143, 149  
*Elohim*, 10  
 Emancipation, political and civic, of Jews, 231, 270, 274, 276, 281-92, 312 f., 320 f., 324; in Austria, 282 f., 290; in Belgium, 287; in Bohemia, 290; in Canada, 289; in England, 282, 289; in France and influenced

- territory, 283-7; in Germany, 282, 290; in Holland, 282, 287 f.; in Hungary, 290; in Italy, 289; in Poland, 290 f.; in Russia, 291; in Switzerland, 290; in U. S. A., 281 f.; cultural emancipation, 272, 275, 277 ff., 292
- Emanuel Congregation of New York City, 301
- Emunot ve'Deot*, 190
- England, 262; Jews of, 230, 269, 282, 289, 326; Liberal Judaism in, 306; Mandate over Palestine, 314 f.
- Enoch, Book of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94
- Enoch, Book of the Secrets of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94
- Eschatology, 56 ff., 93, 128
- Esdras, I, in Apocrypha, 93; II, in Apocrypha, 94
- Essenes, 108, 119 ff., 128 ff., 134, 182 f., 220
- Esther, Book of, 91 f., 148, 163
- Esther, Additions to, in Apocrypha, 94
- Ethical Wills, 226
- Ethics, 204, 214, 258 f.; *see* teachings of prophets, philosophers, rabbis
- Ethiopians, 35
- Ethnarch, head of Judeans, 113, 118
- Etiquette, 83
- Euchel, Isaac, of Koenigsberg, 279
- Evil, Bible view of, 99 f.; dualistic explanation of, 55, 131 f.; originates from serpent, Naasite view, 143; is man-made, 213, 266; is natural inclination in man, 259 f.; is requited in after-life, 224, 257; is eradicated through transmigration and soul impregnation, 240; dogmatized, 228; laws of nature must be included in seeking solution to problem of, 331
- Exilarch, head of Babylonian Jews, 156, 175 f., 181, 187, 189 f.
- Exile, First, 47 ff., 53, 88, 256, 322; Second, 134, 256, 323
- Exodus from Egypt, influence on Judaism, 13 ff., 331
- Exodus, Book of, 63, 153
- Ezekiel, prophet, 47 ff., 53, 62, 92, 108
- Ezra, scribe, 58 ff., 63 f., 66, 86, 102 f., 156, 236, 247
- Faith, 43 f., 74 f., 256, 330, 331
- Fasting, 13, 172, 174, 260
- Fate, 111, 119, 174, 188, 334
- Fatimites, Arab dynasty of, 194
- Fayum, Egypt, 188
- Festivals, origins, 12, 25; emphasized in Priestly Code, 63; pilgrimage to Temple, 69, 78, 118; Service established in synagogue, 138; Abu Isa's modification of, 181; Karaite modification of, 185; two-day observance, 136, 293
- Fez, Africa, 204
- Firkovich, Abraham, Karaite, 193
- Fiscus Judaicus*, 140
- France, Jews in, 198 ff., 217 f., 222, 230, 269, 283 ff.; French revolution, 274, 283
- Frank, Jacob, Messianic pretender, 245 f.
- Frankel, David, 270
- Frankel, Zachariah, Conservative leader, 298 f., 304, 327
- Frankfort Conference (1845), 298
- Frederick the Great, 271, 280
- Free-will, 82, 111, 132, 191, 207, 213
- Friedlander, David, 276 f., 280, 292
- Friedlander, M., Neo-Orthodox leader, quoted, 326
- Gad, tribe, also deity, 8, 48
- Galicia, Jews in, 263, 268 f., 312
- Galilee, Palestine, 118, 123, 125, 141, 146, 148, 239
- Gamaliel II, Tanna, 136 ff.
- Gaonate, Babylonian, 175 ff., 179, 187 ff., 194, 197, 216, 221, 247; Palestinian, 178, 189
- Garstang, J., archaeologist, quoted, 22
- Geiger, Abraham, Reform leader, 295 ff.
- Gemara*, 170
- Genesis, Book of, 64 ff., 131, 152, 163
- Gerizim, Mount, 60, 106
- Germany, Jews in, Talmud study of,

- 198, 225; religious customs of, 221, 238; mysticism among, 221 f.; Crusades injure, 202, 230; cultural emancipation of, 278 f.; political emancipation of, 269, 282, 290; Reform Judaism among, 292 ff.; persecution of Third Reich to, 292, 314
- Gerona, 218
- Gershon ben Judah, 198 f.
- Gezerot*, 253
- Ghetto, 262 f., 277, 279, 281, 289, 313, 320 f.
- Gibeah, 7
- Gilgalim*, 25, 27
- Gnostics, 143
- God, discovery of, 4, 21, 35 f.; true and false notions of, 4; man's understanding of, 4, 74, 99 f.; names of, 10, 212, 221, 241; proof of, 97 f., 254, 330; in history, 52; workings of, 98; attributes of, 98, 190, 212 ff., 224, 228 f., 236, 258; is omnipotent, 74; is love, 37 f., 258; is justice, 36, 98, 256, 258; is truth, 258; incorporeality of, 20, 126, 130 f., 155, 174, 188, 191, 212 f., 215, 224, 258; elimination of sex-element, 20; sovereignty of, 36, 98 f., 308, 317; national retribution by, 35; transcendence of, 47, 53, 65, 74, 82, 131, 203 f., 207, 224; universality of, 39, 52 f.; immanence of, 44 f., 53, 65, 82, 236, 264 ff., 308 f.; sets example for man, 98 f.; *see* Monotheism
- Golden Rule, 118, 127
- Gomer, Hosea's wife, 37
- Graetz, Heinrich, historian and Conservative leader, 299
- Granada, 202
- Great Synagogue, Men of, 60, 103, 151
- Greece, 72
- Greek control of Judea, 75
- Guide of the Perplexed*, 211 f., 217 f.
- Habad*, intellectual branch of modern Hasidism, 267 f.
- Habakkuk, prophet, 43, 161
- Hadrian, Roman ruler, 140 ff., 144 ff., 155
- Haftarah*, 138
- Haggai, prophet, 53
- Hai, Gaon, 187, 194
- Hakam*, 146
- Halabi, Raphael, Joseph, mystic patron, 242
- Halakah*, 138
- Halutzim*, 314
- Hamburg, Jews in, 233, 270, 278
- Hamburg Reform Temple, 293, 297
- Hananel, of Kairawan, 194
- Hananiah ben Hezekiah, 92
- Hanukkah, 87, 260
- Har Sinai Congregation of Baltimore, 301
- Hasidim (Pious), anti-Hellenists, 86-91, 108, 110, 119, 325
- Hasidim, modern mystics, 263 ff.
- Haskalah, of Berlin, 275, 280
- Hasmoneans, *see* Maccabees
- Hayyun, Nehemiah, 244 f.
- Hazor, Palestine, 22
- Hebrew language, modern revival, 279, 314, 320
- Hebrews, 9
- Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 301 ff.
- Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 315
- Hebron, Palestine, 24
- Hegel, philosopher, 277
- Hellenism, in Palestine, 76 f., 102, 109, 248; in Egypt, 76 f., 128 ff., 154; Karaitic recourse to, 183 f.
- Herem*, 13
- Hermeneutics, 116 f., 139, 149, 182
- Herod, ruler of Judea, 113 f., 118 f., 133
- Herz, Marcus, of Berlin, 277
- Herzl, Theodore, Zionist leader, 312 f.
- Hess, Moses, Zionist leader, 311
- Hexateuch, 10 f., 31
- Hezekiah, King of Judah, 41
- High priest, 54, 62, 75, 78, 109, 125, 136
- Hilkiah, priest, 42
- Hillel, Tanna, 105, 115 ff., 127, 135 f., 139, 151, 156; School of, 135 ff.
- Hillul ha-Shem*, 258, 309

- Hirsch, Baron Maurice de, 312  
Hirsch, Samson Raphael, Neo-Orthodox leader, 295, 326  
Hiwi al-Balkhi, critic, 186  
Hiyya, Tanna, 152  
Holdheim, Samuel, Reform leader, 297  
Holland, Jews in, 230, 232, 269, 278, 282, 287  
Horeb, Mountain of Yahweh, 15  
Horiah the Hittite, 29  
Hosea, prophet, 37 ff., 135  
Hoshaia, Palestinian Amora, 157  
Huna, Babylonian Amora, 165  
Hyrchanus II, ethnarch, 112 f.  
Hyrchanus, John, 105, 107 ff.
- Ibn Adret, Solomon, 219, 222 ff.  
Ibn Daud, Abraham, 210 f.  
Ibn Ezra, Abraham, 209 f., 234, 236  
Ibn Ezra, Moses, 205 f.  
Ibn Gabirol, Solomon, 202 ff., 206 f., 209, 222  
Ibn Pakuda, Bahya, 204, 208  
Ibn Shaprut, Hasdai, patron, 195 ff., 202, 206  
Ibn Tibbon family, 217  
*Ikkarim*, 229  
Immersion in water (Mikweh), 144, 309  
Immortality, Bible view of, 121; apocryphal view of, 129, Philo's view of, 132; Maimonides' view of, 213; dogmatized, 228; Da Costa's doubt of, 232; Mendelssohn's defense of, 271; Reform view of, 303, 318, salvation in, 325, 327; modern inquiry into, 332  
Inspiration, 3, 296; *see* Revelation  
Intermarriage, 56 ff., 285, 297  
Irak, 175  
Isaac, Patriarch, 9  
Isaiah, prophet, 31, 38 ff.; Deutero-Isaiah, 49 ff., 57, 209; Trito-Isaiah, 56 f.  
Ishbaal, 29  
Ishmael ben Elisha, Tanna, 139 f., 149, 153, 155  
Ishmael of Akbara, 184 f.  
Islam, *see* Mohammedanism  
Israel, 9, 11, 65  
Israel, Kingdom of, 30 f., 35, 37, 61; destruction of, 39 f.  
Isserles, Moses, codifier of Talmud and rabbinic law, 238 f.  
Italy, Jews in, 222, 224, 230 f., 289
- Jacob, Patriarch, 7, 9, 65  
Jacob ben Asher, codifier of Talmud and rabbinic law, 226, 239  
Jacob Joseph, of Polonnoye, leader in modern Hasidism, 267  
Jacobs, Henry S., Conservative leader, 304  
Jacobsohn, Israel, Reform leader, 292 f.  
Jaffa, Palestine, 311  
James II, English king, 289  
Jamnia, 134 f., 141  
Jason, Hellenist high priest, 85 f.  
Jastrow, Marcus, Conservative leader, 304  
Jehovah, 10  
Jehu, King of Israel, 33  
Jeremiah, prophet, 44 ff., 53  
Jeremy, Epistle of, in Apocrypha, 93  
Jericho, Palestine, 22 f.  
Jeroboam, King of Israel, 30  
Jeroboam II, King of Israel, 35  
Jerusalem, made capital and sanctuary by David, 29; as sanctuary, 30, 43, 46, 76, 106, 133; after destruction of sanctuary, 134, 183; in days of Ezra, 58 ff., 103; visited by Alexander the Great, 75; home of Ben Sira, 82; home of Shammai, 115; Hellenist struggles in, 85 ff.; visit of Roman Procurators to, 118, 126; residence of Great Sanhedrin, 119; locale for Messianic appearance, 124, 242; faced in prayer, by Jews and Mohammedans, 172 f.; residence of Tiberias school, 178  
*Jerusalem*, book by Moses Mendelssohn, 272 ff.  
Jesus of Nazareth, 122 ff., 133, 142, 180 f., 193, 246, 276  
Jewish Agency, for Palestine, 322  
Jewish Colonial Trust, 313  
Jewish Community Centers, 322

- Jewish Institute of Religion, 315  
 Jewish National Fund, 313  
 Jewish Theological Seminary, of America, 304, 319  
 Jewish Welfare Federations, 322  
 Jews, origin of, 5, 8 ff.; religion of, *see* Judaism  
 Jezebel, Ahab's wife, 31 ff.  
*Jinn*, 21  
 Job, Book of, 72 ff., 159, 209, 333  
 Joel, prophet, 66  
 Johanan bar Nappaha, Palestinian Amora, 158 f., 166  
 Johanan ben Zakkai, Tanna, 134 ff.  
 John the Baptist, 122 ff.  
 John, Gospel of, 123  
 Joint Distribution Committee, American, 322  
 Jonah, prophet, 67  
 Jonathan, son of Saul, 29  
 Jonathan, the Maccabee, 91, 108  
 Jose ben Joezer, one of "The Pairs," 105  
 Jose ben Johanan, one of "The Pairs," 105  
 Jose ben Jose, Payyetan, 179  
 Joseph, 9, 11  
 Joseph, Babylonian Amora, 167  
 Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, 282 f.  
 Josephus, Flavius, historian, 108  
 Joshua, 22 ff., 103  
 Joshua, Book of, 10, 22, 66  
 Joshua, high priest, 53  
 Joshua ben Levi, Palestinian Amora, 157 f.  
 Josiah, King of Judah, 42 ff., 61  
 Jubilee Year, 63  
 Jubilees, Book of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
 Judah, Kingdom of, 30 f.; reason for survival, 40; traditions of, 61  
 Judah, the Maccabee, 87, 89 ff., 108, 155  
 Judah, the Patriarch, Tanna, 149 ff., 156, 158, 161, 164, 168  
 Judah, the Pious, mystic, 221 f.  
 Judah ben Ezekiel, Babylonian Amora, 166 f.  
 Judah ben Ilai, Tanna, 148, 150  
 Judah ha-Levi, 206 ff.  
 Judaism, beginnings of, 9, 12 f., 97; a historic religion, 5, 303, 317, 328 f.; nomadic influence in, 12 f., 20, 30; influence of Exodus in, 15; agricultural influence in, 27; influence of commerce in, 30 ff.; Zoroastrian influence on, 54 ff.; Hellenist influence on, 77 ff., 128 ff.; influence of Christianity on, 242, 275; Magian influence on, 168; Mohammedan influence on, 178, 180 f., 186, 188, 190, 195, 197, 229; influence of emancipation on, 291 f., 299, 321-30; forced conversions to, 106, 112 f.; missionary attitude of, 143 ff.; proselytism to, *see* Proselytism; tolerance of, 106, 137, 146, 149, 152, 158, 273 f.; effects of persecution on, 21, 87 f., 141, 145, 154, 159 ff., 168 f., 178, 193 f., 202, 220, 225 f., 231 f., 237, 247, 255, 257, 272, 280 f., 291, 300, 311; reformations in, *see* Reformations; authority in, *see* Authority; beliefs and practices in, *see* individual subjects; scholarship in, 84, 104 f., 110, 134 f., 142, 148, 157, 164 ff., 237, 261, 276, 298 f.; philosophy in, 128 ff., 186 ff., 190 ff., 203 f., 206-14, 217 ff., 226 ff., 231, 234 ff., 248; poetry in, 67 ff., 178 f., 197, 202 ff., 209, 215; as a civilization, 319 f., 328; survival of, 46 ff., 86, 134 ff., 247 f., 255, 261, 269, 322 f., 332 ff.; unity in, 136 ff., 153 f., 249, 262 f., 333 f.; requires the Jewish people, 58, 317 f., 334; laity in, 196, 202, 293, 300, 302, 304, 310  
 Judas, Iscariot, 125  
 Judea, 58, 75 f., 91, 113 f., 118, 122, 134  
 Judean Christians, 142 f.  
 Judges, Book of, 22, 66  
 Judith, Book of, in Apocrypha, 94  
 Julian, Roman ruler, 160  
 Jupiter Capitolinus, heathen temple to, in Jerusalem, 140  
 Justice, 36, 38  
 Kaaba stone, in Mecca, 172  
 Kaddish prayer, 175

- Kadesh, 6  
 Kainukaa, Jewish Arabic tribe, 173  
 Kairawan, Jews in, 194  
 Kalamists, philosophers, 188, 190, 203, 210-48  
 Kalir, Eleazar, Payyetan, 179  
 Kalischer, Zebi Hirsch, Zionist, 311  
*Kallah*, months of rabbinic study, 164  
 Kalonymus family, mystics, 221  
 Kant, Immanuel, German philosopher, 274, 277, 279  
 Kaplan, Mordecai M., Conservative leader, 319  
 Karaism, 180 ff., 197, 234, 248  
 Kayyara, Simeon, codifier of Talmud and rabbinic law, 180  
*Kedushah*, 168  
*Kehillah*, 319  
 Kenites, 15 f., 32  
*Ketubah*, 110  
 Khaibar, Arabia, Jews in, 171  
*Kiddush ha-Shem*, 258, 309  
 Kings, Book of, 66  
 Kirkisani, Abu Yusef al-, Karaite, 186  
 Kishon, river, 28  
 Kohler, Kaufmann, Reform leader, 302  
 Kohut, Alexander, Conservative leader, 304  
 Koran, 172, 174, 188  
 Krochmal, Nahman, 298  
  
 Lamentations, Book of, 46, 163  
 Lavater, Swiss clergyman, 271 f.  
 Law, Oral, origins of, 58 ff., 103 ff.; general, 18, 102 f., 107, 110 ff., 117, 135, 138, 140, 142, 145 ff., 214, 251, 295, 325; codification of, 140, 149, 150 ff.; see Codes of Rabbinic Judaism, and Mishnah, Talmud  
 Law, Written, 18, 61, 93, 102, 110 f., 117, 139, 145, 214, 251, 295, 325; see Bible  
 League of Nations, 314 f.  
 Legend, 13 f., 123, 157 f.; in Apocrypha, 93 f.  
 Leipzig, 289  
 Lemberg, Poland, 246  
  
 Leon, Moses de, compiler of Zohar, 223  
 Lessing, German writer, 271  
 Leucippus, Greek philosopher, 188  
 Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), philosopher, 227, 234  
 Levitic priesthood, 18, 43, 47, 67 f., 103  
 Leviticus, Book of, 63, 153  
*Lex Talionis*, 13  
 Liberal Jewish Synagogue, of London, 306  
 Liberal Judaism, 274, and see Reform Judaism  
*Libertini*, 155  
 Lilienblum, Moses Loeb, Zionist leader, 311  
*Logos*, 131 f., 184  
 Louis XVIII, King of France, 286  
 Luke, Gospel of, 123  
 Luria, Isaac (Ari), mystic, 239 ff., 266 f.  
 Luther, Martin, 230  
 Luzzatto, Moses Hayyim, 245  
 Lyra, Nicholas de, 230  
  
 Maccabees, 87, 89 ff., 102, 105 ff., 112 ff., 128 f.  
 Maccabees, Book of, I, II, in Apocrypha, 93; III, IV, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
 Magians, 168, 175  
 Magic, 26, 54  
 Mahoza, Babylonia, 167  
*Mahzor Vitry*, 201  
 Maimon, Solomon, 277 ff.  
 Maimonides, Moses, 192, 210 ff., 220, 222, 225 ff., 234, 238, 252, 271; controversy over teachings of, 216 ff.  
 Malachi, prophet, 57  
 Manasseh, King of Judah, 41 ff.  
 Manasses, Prayer of, in Apocrypha, 93  
 Mannheimer, Isaac Noah, 297 f.  
 Maranos, Jewish group in Christianity, 230, 232 ff.  
 Marduk, deity, 48  
 Mark, Gospel of, 123, 125  
 Martyrdom, 90, 257  
 Martyrdom of Israel, Book of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94

- Maryland, State of, 281  
 Masorites, 179  
 Mattathias, father of Maccabees, 86 f.  
 Matthew, Gospel of, 123, 125  
*Mazebah*, 25, 27  
 Meassefim, 279  
 Mecca, Arabia, 171 ff.  
 Medigo, Elijah del, 231, 234  
 Medigo, Joseph Solomon del, 234  
 Medina (Yathrib), Arabia, 171, 173 f.  
 Meir, Tanna, 146, 148 ff.  
*Mekilta*, 153  
 Menahem ben Saruk, 196 f., 199  
 Mendelssohn, Moses, philosopher, 270 ff., 279, 287, 295  
 Menelaus, Hellenist high priest, 85, 90  
 Meni, deity, 48  
 Meribbaal, 29  
 Messiah, 82, 90, 106, 119, 121, 166, 173, 178, 214, 228 f., 245, 256, 293, 300 f.; prophetic conceptions of, 39, 52 ff.; apocalyptic conceptions of, 90, 93, 121; Reform conceptions of, 296, 303, 309; Jesus as the, 122 ff., 142, 145, 218, 229; Bar Kokeba as, 140 ff., 145  
 Messianic pretenders, 180 f., 222 f., 240, 244, 246 ff., 256; Sabbatai Zebi as, 241 ff.; Jacob Frank as, 245 f.  
 Metaphysics, 82, 224  
*Meturgaman*, 137, 161  
 Micah, of Moresheth, prophet, 40 f.  
 Midrash, 147, 195  
 Midrash Haggadah, 147 f., 162 ff., 169, 194  
 Midrash Halakah, 147, 150, 152 f., 157, 162, 216  
*Midrash Rabbah*, 162  
 Mikolski, Catholic canon, 246  
 Mirabeau, Count, 274, 283  
 Miracle, 14 ff., 23, 40, 122, 124, 266 ff.  
 Miriam, wife of Herod, 114  
 Mishnah, 94, 147, 149 ff., 156, 163 f., 169 f., 195, 215, 221, 247; rules for interpreting, 158  
 Mission of Israel, Bible view of, 49 ff., 255; individual responsibility in, 258; Reform emphasis on, 309, 318, 329; survival value of concept of, 323, 332  
 Mitnaggedim, 268 f., 325  
*Mizwot*, 257, 259  
 Modena, Judah Leon, 232, 234  
 Modin, 86  
 Mohammed, 171 ff., 180 f.  
 Mohammedanism, 40, 171 ff., 180 f., 183, 207, 248, 303; conversions to, 193, 243 f.  
 Molé, Count, 285  
 Monotheism, origins of, 21, 36, 98, 323; evolution of, 27, 35 f., 42, 52 ff., 99; incorporated in prayer-book, 138; central in Rabbinic Judaism, 254; central in Reform Judaism, 308; Samaritan belief in, 106; accepted by Mohammed, 172 ff.; Philo's challenge to, 132; Magian challenge to, 168; relation of Christianity to, 126, 285, 297; ethical significance of, 33, 36, 99, 318  
 Montefiore, Claude G., Reform leader, 306 ff.  
 Moore, George F., 144, 153, 247  
 Morais, Sabato, Conservative leader, 304  
 Mordecai, 92  
 Mordecai of Eisenstadt, 244  
 Morgenstern, Julian, 35 n.  
 Mortara child, kidnapping of, 311  
 Moses, 9, 11, 13-21, 61, 63, 72, 102 f., 106, 121, 151, 220, 228 f., 236  
 Moses, Five Books of, *see* Pentateuch and Hexateuch  
 Moses ben Enoch, 197  
*Mutakallimun*, 188  
 Mysticism, among Essenes, 121; among Gnostics, 143; of Zohar, 147; in Cabala development, 220 ff.; revived by Luria, 239 ff.; in Hasidism, 263 ff.; as reaction to rationalism, 217 f.; emotional value of, 248  
 Naasites, 143  
 Naboth, 32  
 Nahman of Bratzlav, leader of modern Hasidism, 268  
 Nahmanides, Moses, 218 f., 222



Nahum, prophet, 44  
 Napoleon Bonaparte, 284 ff., 289, 292 f.  
 Nathan, prophet, 29 f.  
 Nathan, of Babylon, Tanna, 146  
 Nathan ben Jehiel, of Italy, 205  
 National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, 302  
 National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 302  
 Nationalism, in Judaism, 53, 58, 66 f., 127, 208 f., 275, 305, 310 ff., 329  
 Nazarenes, 133, 142  
 Nazareth, Palestine, 123 f.  
 Nazirite, 31 f.  
 Nazism, 321  
 Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, 88  
 Nehardea, Babylonia, 156, 165 f.  
 Nehemiah, 60, 63, 66  
 Neo-Orthodox Judaism, 295, 326 ff., 330  
 Neo-Platonism, 203, 209 f., 222 f., 248  
 Nero, Roman ruler, 133  
 New-moon observance, 12  
 New Testament, 108, 123, 270  
 New Year's Day, Festival, 260; origin in Priestly Code, 63; during Second Temple, 78; two-day observance, 136; Anan favors transfer to Day of Atonement, 185; dogmatized, 228  
 New York City, Jews in, 301, 304, 327  
 Nicanor, Syrian general, 90, 92  
 Nineveh, 44  
 Nisibis, Babylonia, 156  
 Nordau, Max, Zionist leader, 312 f.  
 North Carolina, State of, 282 n.  
 Numbers, Book of, 63, 153, 163  
  
 Obadiah, prophet, 67  
 Oinomaos, of Gadara, cynic, 149  
 Omri dynasty, 31  
 Onias III, high priest, 85  
 Onias, Tanna, 112  
 Ophites, 143  
 Oracle, 6, 26, 129  
*Or Adonai*, 228, 273  
*Ormazd*, 55  
 Orthodox Judaism, evaluation of,

237, 320, 325 f.; quarrel with Reform, in Germany, 293; drift from, in U. S. A., 305 f.; relation of Mendelssohn to, 274; place of Maimonides' articles of belief in, 214; two-day observance of Festivals in, 136; future of, 330  
  
 Pablo Christiani, 218 f.  
 Padua, Italy, 231, 234, 245  
 "Pairs, The," 105, 114 f., 135  
 Palestine, 57 f., 120, 171, 177 ff., 245, 317 f.; restoration to, 46 f., 52 ff., 137 f., 293, 297, 300, 303 f., 310 f., 321; relation to diaspora, 154 ff., 320; development of Talmud in, 156 ff.; modern, 106, 311 ff., 319 f., 323, 329  
 Paradise, 157 f.  
 Paris, France, 284  
 Parthians, 113  
 Passover, Festival, origin of, 12, 25; stressed in Priestly Code, 63; two-day observance, 136; dogmatized, 228; central in Rabbinic Judaism, 260; Samaritan observance compared to Jewish, 107; Jesus in Jerusalem preceding the, 124; tolerated by destructive Cult of Reason, 284  
 Patriarch (Nasi), head of Palestinian Jews, 136, 161  
 Patriotism, 46  
 Paul, apostle, 142, 145  
 Payyetanin, liturgical poets, 178 f.  
 Pentateuch, 9 f., 61 ff., 92, 107, 138, 209, 284  
 Pentecost, Festival, origin of, 25; stressed in Priestly Code, 63; two-day observance, 136; dogmatized, 228; central in Rabbinic Judaism, 260; transferred to Sunday by Anan, 182  
 Persia, Jews in, 53, 55 ff., 75, 180 f.  
*Pesikta d'Rab Kahana*, 163  
*Pesikta Midrashim*, 163  
*Pesikta Rabbati*, 163  
 Pharisees, 108 ff., 119 ff., 123, 127, 132 ff., 138, 257  
 Phasael, 113 f.  
 Philadelphia, Penna., 304

Philip, son of Herod, 118  
 Philipson, D., quoted, 304  
 Philistines, 7, 28, 35  
 Philo Judaeus, philosopher, 128 ff.  
 Pilate, Pontius, Roman Procurator, 125, 142  
*Pilpul*, 238, 268  
 Pinsker, Leo, Zionist leader, 311  
*Pirke Abot*, 94, 151  
 Pittsburgh Reform Platform, 302 ff., 310, 316  
 Piyyutim, 178 ff., 203  
 Plato, Greek philosopher, 130, 207, 271  
 Poland, Jews in, 238, 242, 245 f., 268 f.; emancipation of, 263, 290 f.; Zionism in, 312, 314; minority group status of, 317  
 Polytheism, 8 f., 21, 55  
 Pompey, Roman general, 113, 155  
 Pope, Catholic, 223, 289  
 Portugal, Jews in, 230, 232, 234, 325  
 Prayer, 89, 112, 174, 180, 222, 224, 240, 258, 309, 318, 332  
 Prayerbook, 195, 201, 267, 297  
 Prayer Book, Union, 301, 305, 308  
 Priesthood, 26, 37, 44, 49, 60, 62 f., 119 f., 126, 228; decline in, 84 ff., 90 f., 104, 114, 134  
 Prophecy, 227, 296; definition of, 33 ff.; evolution of, 27-33; ecstatic, 26, 31 ff.; literary, 33-75; fulfillment of, 39 f., 45 f., 49-53; anonymity of, 41 ff., 49, 61, 94; Judah ha-Levi's conception of, 207 ff.; Maimonides' conception of, 213, 217  
 Prophet, 66, 103, 124, 220, 249  
*Prosbul*, 115, 198  
 Proselytism, to Judaism, welcomed by Trito-Isaiah, 56 f.; in Alexandria, Egypt, 129 f.; expansion of, 143 ff., 155; hindered, 143 ff., 154; among Arabs, 171; among Chazars in Russia, 206; attitude of Reform to, 309  
 Protestantism, 230, 270  
 Provence, southern France, 216 f., 227  
 Proverbs, Book of, 66, 71 f.  
 Providence, 14 f., 20, 23, 99 f., 119, 214, 227 ff., 265 f., 314, 327

Psalms, Book of, 66 ff., 91, 178 f., 209, 333  
 Pseudepigrapha, 94 f.  
 Ptolemy, general, 76  
 Ptolemy Philadelphus, 77 f.  
 Pumbeditha, Babylonia, 166 f., 175 f., 187, 190, 194  
 Purim, 92, 103, 148, 260  
 Pythagoras, Greek philosopher, 221  
 Querido, Jacob, Messianic pretender, 244  
 Rab, Babylonian Amora, 156, 164 ff.  
 Rabbah bar Nahmani, Babylonian Amora, 167  
 Rabbi, 135, 152  
*Rabbi*, see Judah the Patriarch  
 Rabbinical Assembly of America, 304  
*Rabbon*, 135  
 Rachel, 7  
 Ramadan, Islamic month, 174  
 Rapoport, Solomon, 298  
 Rashi, 200 ff., 209, 226  
 Rechabites, 31 f.  
 Red Sea, 14  
 Reform Judaism, origins of, 288, 291 ff.; innovations in observances, 293 f., 308, 310; principles of, 294 ff., 299 f., 302 ff., 317 f.; in Germany, 310; in England, 306; in the United States, 300 ff., 308 ff., 315 ff., 320, 326, 328 ff., 332  
 Rehoboam, 30 f.  
 Reincarnation, 244 f.  
 Religion, definition of, 1-5, 41; origin of, 1 ff.; primitive, 1-8; discovery in, 20, 101; evolution of, 3 f., 94 ff., 101, 295 ff.; growth through personal experience, 37; growth through crisis, 21, 27 f., 48 f., 87 f., 91, 134 ff., 146 f., 159 ff., 168 f., 257, 331 ff.; growth through substitution because of necessity, 12, 57, 107, 135 f., 146, 300, 332, and see Reform and Conservative Judaism; growth through environmental influence, 13, 24, 178 f., 198 f., 205, 227, 249, 288, 293 f., 301 f., 317; growth through contrasting civili-

- zations, 30 ff.; growth through challenge of sects and neighboring religion, 193, 248; growth through interpretation of Scripture, 115 ff., 139, 251; growth through difference of opinion, 115, 217, 220, 333 f.; growth through allegorical interpretation, 130, 184, 212, 252; growth through grammatic interpretation, 139 f., 179, 191 f., 196-202; growth through emphasis and detail, 252 ff.; growth through search of truth, 307 f.; stagnation in, 106 f., 111 f.; and nature, 1 f., 5 ff., 14 f., 23, 28, 35 n., 40, 69, 330 ff.; supernatural, 2, 121; and history, 63 f.; historic, 5, 69 f.; personal, 44 f., 47, 70, 221 f., 257 f., 264, 332 f.; morality of, 20 f.; democracy in, 112; practical, 3, 253 f., 315, 322; influence of city-life, 77, 324, 327 f.; place of doubt in, 73, modern need for, 322 ff.
- Religions, differences in, 4 f.
- Renaissance, 230 f., 234, 270
- Repentance, 36, 212 f., 228, 260
- Resh Lakish, Palestinian Amora, 158 f.
- Responsa, of Geōnim, 177, 194, 201
- Resurrection, Bible origins of hope for, 56, 90; in apocryphal books, 83, 93, 129; Samaritan belief in, and Jesus, 126 f.; dogmatized by Maimonides, 213 f.; dogmatized by Crescas and Albo, 228-9; bodily, rejected by Reform Judaism, 303, 309
- Revelation, 3 f., 97, 191, 228 f., 309 f., 315, 318, 329 f.; through acts of nature, 15 f., 23, 65, 254, 308, 329, 331; through man, 65, 254, 308, 329, 331; through personal experience, 74 f.; to Moses, 18, 82, 130 f., 207 ff., 213 f., 227, 249 ff., 273, 306, 325 f.; Bible accepted as, 153, 186, 190; supernatural, is the authority, 82, 324 ff., 330 f., 333; Judah ha-Levi's view of, 207 f.; Maimonides' view of, 212
- Reward and Punishment, inevitability of, 36; doubted, 80; comes within a person, 74; in this world, 82 f., 303; in after-life, 90, 93, 256 f., 260; dogmatized, 214, 228 f.; moral law of, similar to law of nature, 99, 309, 332; constructive benefits of, 100; righteous conduct should be independent of, 104
- Righteous remnant, 39
- Ritual, primitive, 2 f., 6, 12; of Yahweh, 18; blind reliance on, denounced by prophets, 34 ff., 38; unnecessary, 233; gains importance in First Exile, 47 ff.; linked with morals, 62, 213; subordinated to morals, 101; strictness emphasized in Apocrypha, 129; by Essenes, 120 f., by Anan ben David, 183; by Pharisees, 111; basic in Rabbinic Judaism, 138, 260; placed above morals by Judah ha-Levi, 208; emphasized by Mendelssohn, 273 ff.; attitude to, in Neo-Orthodox Judaism, 327; in Conservative Judaism, 305, 328; in Reform Judaism, 306, 309, 318, 329
- Rome, control in Palestine, 113 f., 119, 122, 124 ff., 128, 132 ff., 136, 139 ff., 147 f., 159 ff.; Jews in, 155, 289; proselytes in, to Judaism, 145
- Rossi, Azariah dei, 231
- Rothschild, Lord, of England, 314
- Roumania, Jews in, 263, 290
- Russia, Jews in, 193, 206, 263, 268 f., 291, 312
- Russia, Soviet, Jews in, 193, 291, 317, 325 f., 334
- Ruth, Book of, 59, 163
- Saadia, Gaon, 189 ff., 196, 207 f., 221
- Sabbatai Zebi, 241 ff., 264, 268
- Sabbath, origins, 12, 63, 65; gains importance in Exile, 48, 60; emphasized in Rabbinic Judaism, 116, 138, 150, 155, 253, 260; disparaged by Jesus, 127; desecrated by Elisha ben Abuyah, 143; regarded as only a symbol by Yudghan, 181; Karaite attitude, 182, 184 f.; stressed by Essenes, 121, 130; observance forbidden by Hadrian, 141, by Yez-

- degrid, 168, by Cult of Reason, 284; Mattathias allows battle in self-defense on, 87; Mendelssohn's view of, 274; Reform observance of, 310
- Sabbatical Year, 60, 63, 75, 115
- Saboraim, rabbinic interpreters, 169, 176
- Sacred objects, 6 ff., 12, 25
- Sacrifices, origins of, 12, 25 f.; stressed in Priestly Code, 63; prophetic support of, 66; opposed by Essenes, 120; replaced by prayers, 57, 101, 107; replaced by loving-kindness, 135; a crude concession, 213; restoration of, not desired by Reform, 293
- Sadducees, 108, 111 f., 119, 124 f., 134, 136, 182 f., 248, 257
- Safed, Palestine, 239
- Saloniki, 241
- Samaria, 40, 53, 114
- Samaritans, 40, 53 f., 57, 60, 106, 125, 160, 185 f.
- Samuel, prophet, 28
- Samuel, Book of, 66
- Samuel, Babylonian Amora, 156, 164 ff.
- Samuel ha-Levi, patron, 202
- Samuel, Sir Herbert, of England, 314
- Sanctuaries, 6
- Sanhedrin, 114, 118 f., 124 f., 134 f., 176
- Sanhedrin, convened by Napoleon, 285 f.
- Sarah, Abraham's wife, 8
- Sarah, Sabbatai Zebi's wife, 242, 244
- Satan, 52, 72 f., 174
- Saul, King, 28 f.
- Sechter, Solomon, Conservative leader, 304, 327
- Schleiermacher, German philosopher, 277
- Schulman, Samuel, Reform leader, quoted, 316
- Scribes, Pharisaic teachers, 58, 60, 66, 83 ff., 103 f., 110, 112, 119, 127, 250
- Scriptures, Holy, *see* Bible
- Scripturists, 184
- Scythians, 45
- Sedarim Midrashim, 162
- Seers, 26 ff., 32
- Seesen, Germany, 292 f.
- Sefer Hasidim*, 221
- Sefer ha-Hinukh*, 253
- Sefer ha-Mizvot*, 182, 187
- Sefer Yezira*, 221
- Seleucus, general, 76
- Seleucus, IV, Syrian ruler, 85
- Seljuks, 194
- Semites, 5 ff., 171
- Sephardim, 195, 226, 238, 325
- Sepphoris, Galilee, 146
- Septuagint, 77 f., 93 f., 129, 145, 185, 191
- Shakna, Shalom, 238
- Shammai, Tanna, 105, 115, 135, 151; School of, 135 ff.
- Shaphan, 42
- Shas*, 170
- Shechem, 106
- Shemaiah, one of "The Pairs," 114
- Shemoneh-esreh*, 103, 137 f.
- Sherira, Gaon, 194
- Shneur Zalman, leader in modern Hasidism, 267 f.
- Shulhan Aruk*, 237 ff., 247 f., 263, 296, 325
- Sibylline Oracles, Book of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94, 129
- Sidra*, 138, 162
- Sifra*, 153
- Sifre*, 153
- Silver, Abba Hillel, Reform leader, quoted, 316
- Simeon, tribe of, 7
- Simeon, the Righteous, 104
- Simeon ben Gamaliel, Patriarch, 146
- Simeon ben Shetah, 110
- Simon, Hellenist priest, 85
- Simon, Maccabee ruler, 91, 105
- Sin, 143, 186, 229, 250, 259 f., 331, and *see* Evil
- Sinai (Horeb), Mount, 15
- Smith, W. Robertson, quoted, 6
- Smyrna, 241 f.
- Social Justice, 253 f., 303, 315, 318, 329

- Sokolow, Nahum, Zionist leader, 314
- Solomon, King, 29 ff., 71, 81 f.
- Solomon, Psalms of, in *Pseudepigrapha*, 94
- Solomon, Wisdom of, in *Apocrypha*, 93
- Solomon ben Abraham, 217
- Song of Songs, Book of, 71, 92, 163
- Song of Three Children, in *Apocrypha*, 93
- Spain, Jews in, 193, 195 ff., 202 ff., 222 f., 230 f., 269, 325
- Spinoza, Baruch, philosopher, 234 ff., 263, 272 f.
- Stein, Leopold, Reform leader, 300
- Stoics, philosophers, 131 f.
- Suffering, undeserved, 43 f., 49 ff., 72 ff., 80 f., 83, 99 f., 325, 331
- Sunday, observance of, 183, 297
- Sura, Babylonia, 156, 164 ff., 175 f., 189 f., 193, 195, 197
- Surenhuis, Willem, 270
- Susanna, Book of, in *Apocrypha*, 94
- Switzerland, Jewish emancipation in, 290
- Synagogue, 112, 123, 128 f., 134, 143, 153, 261, 266, 292, 321 f., 324, 332; origin of, 48, 57, 78 f.; Service in, 137 f., 153, 162 ff., 168, 178 f., 183, 195, 293 f., 304
- Synagogue, Great, *see* Great Synagogue
- Syria, ancient, 35; under Seleucids, 76 f., 84 ff., 90 ff., 109 f., 171
- Szold, Benjamin, Conservative leader, 304
- Tabernacles, Festival, origin of, 25; Ezra read the Law on, 59; stressed in Priestly Code, 63; riot against Alexander Jannaeus on, 109; two-day observance, 136; dogmatized, 228; central in Rabbinic Judaism, 260
- Taboo, 7 f., 12, 25
- Takkanot*, 198, 253
- Talmud, development of Palestinian, 156 ff., 161 f.; development of Babylonian, 164 ff.; relation of Palestinian to Babylonian, 169 f., 194, 216; basis of Rabbinic Judaism, 177, 179 f., 187 f., 197, 219 f., 225, 247, 262 f., 305; study of, 197 ff., 202, 204 f., 217; commentaries on, 169, 177, 194, 200 ff., 214, 270; revolt against, 180 ff., 231 ff., 248, 296 f., 299 f.; opinion regarding Pharisees, 108
- Tam, Rabbenu Jacob, 201
- Tanhuma bar Abba, Palestinian Amora, 163
- Tanhuma Midrashim, 163
- Tannaim, contributors to the Mishnah, 84, 115, 135, 150, 157
- Targum Onkelos*, 145
- Tarphon, Tanna, 140
- Teleology, 101
- Teller, Protestant clergyman, 276
- Temple, First, 30 f., 41 ff., 45 ff., 67; destruction of, 46 f., 52, 155, 170;
- Temple, Second, 53 f., 56, 58 f., 62, 66 ff., 76, 78, 86, 113 f., 118, 124 f., 128 f., 133, 137; rededication of, by Judah Maccabee, 87; destruction of, 84, 120, 133 ff., 140 f., 143, 170, 183, 250, 288, 314; restoration of, promised by Emperor Julian, 160
- Teraphim*, 25, 30
- Tetrarch, 113, 118
- Theodosius I, Roman ruler, 160
- Theodosius II, 161
- Therapeutae, 129 f.
- Tiberias, Palestine, 146, 158 f., 178 f.
- Titkin, Rabbi in Breslau, 297
- Titus, Roman ruler, 134, 145, 155
- Tobit, Book of, in *Apocrypha*, 93
- Toledo, Spain, 210, 225
- Torah, definition of, 18, 61; *see* Written Law
- Tosafot, 202, 226, 238
- Tosefta, supplements to Mishnah, 152, 157
- Totemism, 7 f.
- Transmigration, 183, 233, 240
- Tribes, participating in exodus from Egypt, 13, 22
- Trinity, primitive, 25; Christian, 172, 190, 245 f.; of Nehemiah Hayyun, 245

- Troyes, France, 200  
 Turkey, Jews in, 193, 245, 269  
 Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
 Tyre, Phoenicia, 85  
  
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 301 ff.  
 Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, 327  
 United States, Jews in, 230, 281 f., 300, 305, 326  
 United Synagogue of America, 304  
 Universalism, in Judaism, 53, 57 f., 67, 130, 143 f., 283, 285 f., 297, 303, 329  
 Uriel da Costa, of Amsterdam, 232 f.  
 Usha, Galilee, 141, 146  
  
 Venice, 237  
 Verona, 220  
 Vespasian, Roman ruler, 134  
 Vienna, 277, 297  
 Visigoths, 195  
 Vital, Hayyim, mystic, 241  
 Vulgate, 94  
  
 Waraka, 172  
 Wedding ritual, 141 f.  
 Weizmann, Chaim, Zionist leader, 314  
 Whitehead, A. N., 330  
 Wilhelmsschule, Breslau, 292  
 Wilna, 267 f.  
 Wisdom Literature, in Bible, 66, 71 ff., 79 ff., 82 ff.; in apocryphal literature, 93 f.  
 Wise, Isaac Mayer, Reform leader, 301  
  
*Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 294 f.  
 Wolf, Johann C., 270  
 Wolffsohn, David, Zionist leader, 313  
 World Union for Progressive Judaism, 306  
 World War, Jews in, 290  
  
 Yahweh, nature of, 15 f.; Mountain of, 15 ff.; demonstrates power, 23; covenant with, 15 ff., 21, 31; and Baal, 27; versus Baal, 7, 10, 27 ff.  
 Yahwists, 30 ff.  
 Yannai, Payyetan, 179  
 Yathrib, Arabia, 171, 173  
 Yehudai, Gaon, 180  
 Yemen, Arabia, 171  
 Yeshivah College of America, 327  
 Yezdegird II, 168  
 Yiddish, 272  
*Yigdal*, 215  
 Yudghan, sectarian, 181, 183  
  
 Zaddik, 266 ff.  
 Zadokite priesthood, 47, 63, 108  
 Zadokite Work, Fragments of, in Pseudepigrapha, 94  
 Zangwill, Israel, of England, 312  
 Zealots, Pharisaic group of, 119, 121, 124, 133  
 Zechariah, prophet, 54 f.  
 Zephaniah, prophet, 41 f.  
 Zerubbabel, 53 f.  
 Zionism, 310 ff.  
 Zionist Congress, 311 f.  
 Zionist Organization, 322  
*Zohar*, 147, 223 ff., 240 f.  
 Zoroastrianism, 54 ff., 180, 247  
 Zunz, Leopold, 295, 298, 304

















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